

D E S M O N D.

A

N O V E L.

BY

CHARLOTTE SMITH.

VOLUME III.

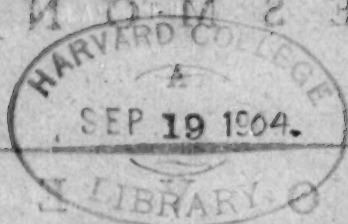
L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR G. G. J. AND J. ROBINSON,

PATER-NOSTER-ROW, 1792.

D. E. S. M. O. N. D.

D. E. S. M. O. N. D.



Let me know

TO MR. W. L. H. E. L.

CHARLES LOVELL
THOUGH there has not been much
for you to answer my former letters, I am
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PRINTED FOR G. O. L. AND J. ROBINSON

TALKS WITH YOU, 1901

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DESMOND.

LETTER I.

TO MR. BETHEL.

Bridge-foot, June 13, 1791.

THOUGH there has not been time for you to answer my former letters, I am growing extremely impatient to hear from you ; but till I do, though I fear you will blame all I have done, I must beguile the anxiety of the situation I am now in, by continuing my narrative.

I went on the evening of yesterday, at the time Geraldine had appointed, to her house.—So far from rejoicing in the final dismissal of her importunate French visitor, as I hoped to have found her, she appeared extremely alarmed at his deter-

mined perseverance ; and under the greatest apprehensions of another visit from him on the following morning.—She repeated, with symptoms of great disquiet, the conversation she had held with him ; and his eager remonstrances, on her positively refusing to accompany him ; mingled with what he believed the most irresistible adulation, left me no doubt as to his views ; nor of the compact made with Verney, by which he assured himself he should carry them into effect.—Though the whole of this odious transaction did not seem to have struck Geraldine as it had done me, I see that she suspects but too much of it ; and such, indeed, was the language the Duc de Romagnecourt held, that of his designs she could not be ignorant.—She evaded, however, repeating the extravagant speeches which made them so evident, with modest dignity ; but, as this was no time to conceal from her any part of my apprehensions, I ventured to ask her—whether she could be blind to the
real

real motive of this importunate interference ; and, if it was not very visible that the Duke's pretended friendship for Mr. Verney, was only a passion for her personal charms.—She owned that it appeared so ; and then added, that during the time she was under the cruel necessity of remaining in London, where the acquaintance begun, she perceived that this foreigner had considered the sums he lent to Verney, as a sort of passport to her favour ; and had then addressed her in a style, which only the lighter manners of his country, and his total ignorance of her real character, could have induced her to tolerate a moment : but she had believed, that on returning to France he had thought no more about her.

I could have told her, that the impressions she made, even when those impressions were only those of her personal loveliness, were not easily erased ; but I was in such a state of mind, that I dared hardly speak at all, lest I should too evidently betray, what in her present situation would

have been doubly improper.—Her distress distracted me; and I knew not how to relieve it but by a direct address to the Duke, from whence I saw many ill consequences, and the others; to which I should have been entirely indifferent—I understood that this unfeeling suitor, had dared not only to express his contempt for all those ties which she held sacred, but to ridicule Verney; judging, perhaps, that it was impossible she could love him; and that her shewing she despised him, (which was a sentiment he thought she could not conceal,) would be a very important point in his favour.—“It is now,” said she, “it is now that I feel, in all its bitterness, that humiliation to which the conduct of Mr. Verney has reduced me—This man dares thus address me, because I am fallen from the situation in which I once moved, and he supposes that my mind is humbled with my fortune.”—She had hitherto restrained her tears, but they now fell on her bosom—Had so many drops of blood been drawn

drawn from my heart, I should have felt them less painfully—Blame me not too severely if the sense of what Geraldine suffered (she, at whose feet the world should be prostrate) my cursed situation which rendered my attempting to relieve her so hazardous to her fame—the dread of her continuing defenceless and unprotected as she was, to be exposed to proposals so insufferably insolent ; the effect which I saw this state of uneasiness had on her health, and a thousand other reflexions, crowding together into my mind, threw me off my guard.—By heaven, Bethel ! I was in a momentary phrenzy—and forgetting that to avoid encreasing her discomfort was the object nearest my heart, I yielded to the violence of such mingled and distracting emotions ; and, I believe, looked and behaved like a madman.

I was almost immediately checked, however, by the effect this sally of ungovernable passion had on Geraldine—She seemed as one thunderstruck for a moment ; then

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recovering

recovering her presence of mind, she put her hand gently on my arm; and, with a countenance where what she felt for herself, was lost in the expression of solicitude for me; she said—"My good friend! what is the meaning of all this?—Do not suffer your concern for me to overcome you thus—Above all things, you *must* promise me that you do not personally appear in this affair—Give me your advice—I know it will be that of the kindest and most brotherly friendship, and I will follow it: but I must insist upon your relinquishing every idea of speaking to Monsieur de Romagnecourt—to any other proposal you shall make, I ought to attend."—The manner in which this was uttered, restored me instantly to myself; I was ashamed of the expressions of vengeance against Romagnecourt, and of rage at my own situation, that I had used.—I felt all their impropriety, and regretted that I had uttered them: yet the emotions which gave them birth were as strong as ever; and,

and, while I repented, I could not apologize for them—I remained silent, till Geraldine, in a voice yet more soothing, enquired, what I would advise her to do, since it was too certain that no common means of repressing, an unwelcome importunity, had any effect on the arrogant perseverance of Monsieur de Romagnecourt—For he had told her, that he should remain at least a week in the neighbourhood, in expectation, that she would change in his favour, a resolution so hastily adopted.

“ Good God ! exclaimed I, is it impossible to escape seeing this man ? is it impossible to deny yourself ? On what pretence does he claim a right to molest you ? ”

—“ On that,” she replied, “ of being sent by Mr. Verney.”

“ But has he no sense or propriety, none of the respect he owes you ? ”

“ Alas ! ” answered she, “ it is, I think, too certain that I shall suffer much more persecution before I am released from him ; but be that as it may, you may be assured,

Desmond, that the idea of your personal danger, which could not fail to arise from any application to Mr. De Romagnecourt, is infinitely more terrifying to me, than any apprehensions I entertain for myself; and, after all, why should I be thus uneasy at impertinence which cannot last many days; and which can only harass and fatigue my spirits, but not do me any material injury?"

"And is it not then (Geraldine, I had nearly said) is it not a material injury, dear Madam, to be subjected for hours and days to hear such sort of conversation as that with which this man presumed to address you? and is not your deigning to admit a second and a third visit, giving him reason to hope you will finally be less inexorable than you declare yourself?—Presuming as he is, a very little of what he will interpret as encouragement, will render his insolence insupportable.—I own, that if I, who have not the happiness to be allied to you, and have certainly no right

to

to influence you, should interfere on this occasion to deliver you from his importunity ; (which, I believe, it would not be difficult to do) such an interference might give occasion to disagreeable misconstructions ; but surely it were better to hazard those, which, perhaps, in this remote place, might not happen, than to leave you a day, an hour, exposed to the intrusion of this assuming and arrogant foreigner — Would it be consistent with the friendship, the esteem, you are so good as to allow me to profess ; (and I hope I need not say how sincerely I profess it) to leave you in a predicament, in which, were you my sister, I could not bear that you should remain a moment ?”

I saw this argument had a visible effect on Geraldine—but, shall I own, that at this moment my selfish heart bounded with delight at the idea that I was not indifferent to her ; and regardless of the additional pain *she* must feel from a preference against the indulgence of which her

principles would revolt—I dared to taste delight, which no consideration had, for a moment, power to restrain.—She remained silent; and then said with a deep sigh—“ I thank you most truly, Desmond, for supposing me your sister—Ah! would to God I were indeed so!—Had I such a brother, I could not be exposed to a situation so cruel—I should then have a protector! But as it is, (and her tears fell fast) I am deserted by all those on whose guardianship I have a claim.—To your generous—your more than brotherly friendship, I am already but too much indebted—Were there not an infinite number of objections, I could not bear to encrease this debt; but, as it is, the bare idea of any interview, on the subject of his visits here, between you and Monsieur de Romagnecourt, is intolerably dreadful; and I entreat you never to name it again.”

“ Something, however, must be done,” said I; “ for unauthorised, as I am, to speak to Monsieur de Romagnecourt, I can as little

little bear his insults to you—insults, from which it is the indispensable duty of every man of honor and feeling to defend you.”

“You terrify me to death!” answered she—“Promise me—I insist upon your promise, that of such a measure as applying to this French man yourself, you will think no more.”

“Promise me then,” said I, “that you will think of some way of avoiding his future visits.”

“I know of but one, and that — that is, at present, impracticable.”

“Name it, however, for heaven’s sake.”

“It is”, said she, hesitating—“to go to Bath to my mother; but besides other considerations, which render such a journey, at present, almost impossible—I have reason to fear that I should be at this time an unwelcome visitor—My brother is, as Fanny’s last letters tell me, on the point of being married into a family, whose favour, prosperity alone can conciliate.—For this desired union my mother has long been

labouring ; and should my presence, depressed and humbled as I am, impede it—I know, too well, that I should be a most unwelcome visitor—Unwelcome to every one but my Fanny.”

This cruel reflection conquered, for a moment, her equality of mind ; deep sighs and tears choaked her. Oh ! Bethel ! to behold the woman I adore in such a state, without daring to relieve, or even to participate her sorrows !—There is on earth no condition so painful.—I internally cursed her detestable relations ; (of whom all but her sister are so unworthy of her) and, for a little time, was too much affected by her anguish, to be able to speak.—At length, I said—“ But is it not possible for you to be in lodgings where you need not be under the necessity of meeting this ridiculous Fairfax family—You may escape from hence, for a time, to return again when your pursuer is baffled.”

“ A journey, with such a family, to Bath,” said she mournfully, “ and lodgings,

ings, when I arrive there, are expences which my mother would assuredly murmur at. Perhaps you are not aware, that though it was found impracticable for me to give up my settlement, as I most willingly would have done; yet, that I have nothing during Mr. Verney's life, but a trifling allowance by way of pin-money, which I have never asked for, and he has never paid. Though he could not sell his estate with my jointure secured upon it, yet it is sequestered—Colonel Scarsdale inhabits the house for a certain number of years; and the income is his—Verney has, therefore, left himself destitute, and thus improvident, on his own account—Is it wonderful he should be so on mine and his children?"

"Oh!" thought I, "had he been *only* improvident—equally improvident, it were well!—but for himself he thinks but too much; and you, Geraldine, are the destined sacrifice!" But

But this, though I thought it, I dared not say. I shall make my letter endless, if I relate all that afterwards past.—Alas! my friend! I found, that notwithstanding the precaution with which you promised to supply her, by means of her sister, she had been of late so inadequately furnished with money, that she had not enough to pay what must be paid for her apartments, were she to quit them, and to answer the expences of her journey. At length, she consented to my supplying her with what was necessary for this purpose, to be repaid, as she believes, by her mother; and the apartments, (having paid for the present half-year,) she still retains; and thus it is settled, that if she cannot to-morrow dismiss this very improper and importunate visitor, she quits this place, and you will see her, my friend, at Bath. On my part, that no remarks may be made on our being in this retired spot, or travelling together, I shall see her only to a place of safety, probably

probably as far as Gloucester, and then go into Kent for a few days; after which, there will surely be no impropriety in my joining you at Bath, (as I have always intended to do) even though Geraldine *should* be there.—She has promised to write to me—(I trust there is no harm in that) I shall hear how long her stay is likely to be.—If Waverly's marriage takes place, and all her own family look as cool upon her, as there is reason to fear they will, she will, perhaps, hasten to bury herself again in her beloved solitude: at all events, my stay at Bath must be short, as some business, from which I cannot disengage myself, will absolutely require my presence in France early in July; and then, perhaps, shall take leave of England *for ever*.

The breath of scandal has never yet injured the spotless character of Geraldine. You, who know, that my love for her has a just claim to be called *true* love, because
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it seeks only her good—You, my friend, before you condemn me, will ask yourself, whether *I* am likely to commit any indiscretion that will really injure her fame?—You will not, after having so reflected, blame me for what has passed since I have been here—I could not act otherwise—And after all, who is to report my being here at all?—Those foreigners do not know me even by name—They do not know that I am acquainted with Geraldine—Her departure cannot be imputed to me; and though I foresee that you will now find a hundred reasons to condemn me—I value myself on having acted, as you would have acted, had you been so situated.

Farewell, dear Bethel, till I meet you.—You will, perhaps, see the lovely subject of this letter almost as soon as you receive it. From you, and from her sister, she will hear the soothing voice of friendship and tenderness—And I recommend her to
those

DESMOND.

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those good offices from you, which, from her own family, I am afraid she will not receive.

Ever your's, faithfully,

LIONEL DESMOND.

LET.

LETTER II.

TO MISS WAVERLY.

Gloucester, June 16th, 1791.

I STAY here a day, my Fanny, to recruit my exhausted spirits, after the variety of agitations I have been exposed to. You have, by this time, received my two last letters; and know the strange visit that has driven me from my peaceable abode; though I would have continued there in despite of importunities and impertinence, which could not have lasted long, if I had not dreaded Mr. Desmond's interference, which seemed hourly probable; and which nothing but my determining to put myself under the protection of my family, could have long prevented.

My account of the second and third visits of the Duc de Romagnecourt*, would

* In a letter which does not appear.

convince you that he was not easily to be repulsed; nor would Desmond be persuaded that I ought patiently to endure this transient evil—I saw consequences attending *his* applying to Monsieur de Romagnecourt, of which I could not bear the idea without terror—Any measure, therefore, was to be adopted rather than hazard it; and yet I foresee, that if even his present interference, and his friendly attention to me, be known, inferences may be drawn as false towards him, as unfavorable to me. Alas! my Fanny, the prospect every way around me is darkening; and in the storms that are on all sides gathering, I shall probably perish. Desmond was so good as to insist on accompanying me as far as this place on horseback—He then immediately left me; and is gone into Kent. I am very sure, my sister, by your last letter*, that you blame me for the circumstances that have occurred since Mr. Desmond's residence in the neighbourhood of my re-

* Which does not appear.

tirement; and I own that such adventures befalling a married woman, separated from her husband, are very likely to raise, even in the most candid minds, suspicions of her conduct.—You, however, surely know me too well to harbour them a moment; and if I were not bound by all the ties of honour and gratitude to secrecy, I could at once convince you, that no improper attachment to me, has been the cause of Mr. Desmond's journey hither.—Still, as it is impossible that this can at present be explained, I wish that as little may be said of it as possible.

I know not how I find resolution to proceed from day to day in this career of misery.—My children, for whom I ought to live, alone support me; nor have I in the world another motive to wish my existence prolonged, unless it be your affection, my dear Fanny.—Do not, therefore, now when I most want it, do not let it fail. You will receive this letter a few hours before my arrival—Let me find at the Bear at Bath, a note from you, to say where

where you have taken lodgings for me ; when I shall see you, and when I may be permitted to pay my duty to my mother. — Surely, however, she may be occupied with the approaching festivities which are intended for the more beloved and more prosperous part of her family, she will not refuse some maternal kindness to her unfortunate child, whose unhappiness is not of her own creating—and who, though she returns poor and desolate, like the Prodigal in Scripture, has nothing wherewith to reproach herself ; nor occasion to say, “ Lo I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight.”

Perhaps, my dear Fanny, your ill-starred Geraldine will not long trouble you.— “ There certainly is such a distemper,” says Fielding, “ as a *broken heart* ; though it is not mentioned in the bills of mortality.”—Till that calamity robs mine of every sensation, it will be fondly attached to you.

GERALDINE VERNEY.

LET-

LETTER III.

TO MR. DESMOND.

Bath, June 21, 1791.

I AM again undertaking to execute a very unpleasant task—But my friendship for you, Desmond, is of a nature which withstands even—what shall I call it? not unkindness, nor duplicity; for I believe, from my soul, you are incapable of either.—But that want of confidence which ought to subsist between us, and in which you certainly failed when you came to England, and went into Herefordshire without informing me of your intentions.—The consequences of this imprudence, for such it surely was, have been more uneasy to the object of your solicitude than you are aware of; but though I am still vexed, and a little angry with you, because I think you acted unlike yourself, it is impossible

possible to see her, without feeling so much interested, that every other consideration is absorbed in anxiety for her.—Geraldine is, indeed, an excuse for every failure towards *me*; but when that failure has injured her, I cannot allow of the apology; and the task of chiding you for your indiscretions, and relating their effects, falls on me most unwelcomely.

Early yesterday, I received a hurried and confused note from Miss Waverly, beseeching me to see her, by some means or other, in the course of the morning.—I answered that I would be at a bookseller's, where we sometime have, you know, made these *assignments*, within an hour.—I was punctual to my appointment, and in a few moments after, Fanny arrived, wrapped in a large morning cap, and a cloak, tied round her neck, which were, however, insufficient, even with the deep veil that depended from her bonnet, to conceal that her eyes were swollen with weeping, and that her whole frame was in extreme agitation.

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She seemed unable to speak when she came in, but recovering herself, she asked if I would walk with her, as she had much to say to me.—We took the shortest way to get out of town, and proceeded in profound silence, till we reached the fields—She then put into my hands her sister's last letter, dated from Gloucester, and told me, that she had obeyed, as well as she dared, her directions, and had provided a lodging for her; but that her mother was extremely displeased with the journey, and had heard, by some means or other, for which it was very difficult to account, that Mr. Desmond had been some time concealed in the neighbourhood of her residence at Bridgefoot, and was the person who had advised her to quit it for Bath, instead of complying with Mr. Verney's wishes, and going to France, with a nobleman of very high rank, a married man, a man of the very first fashion and consequence, under whose protection she might not only have travelled with utmost ease and elegance, but,

since she was directed to do so, by her husband, with the greatest propriety.—“Such,” said Miss Waverly, “is the representation that has been made to my mother, and which, added to her own dislike of Geraldine’s coming hither at this time, has irritated her so much against my sister, that she will hear nothing I can say in her excuse.—She has even forbidden me to see her; I shall not, however, obey her in that respect; but I dare not so directly violate my mother’s cruel injunctions, as to meet her on her arrival.—Yet how will her already, half broken heart, be wounded, when instead of a friendly reception from a sister, who fondly loves her, from a mother who ought to protect her, she finds, awaiting her arrival, a harsh letter from that mother, filled with remonstrances and complaints.”

“She shall at least” said I, as soon as I could recover from the pain this intelligence gave me, “she shall at least find one friend ready to receive her; I will

wait myself her coming, and soften as much as I can, the inhuman conduct of Mrs. Waverly; forgive me Miss Fanny, I think it most inhuman."

"I was about," answered she, "to solicit that friendly assistance which you now so generously offer.—Without some such interference, the blow will quite overwhelm my unhappy sister.—By what means my mother has got such intelligence, I cannot imagine.—Her usual informer, one whose visits I always dreaded, is no longer here, and if she were, I cannot discover how Desmond's abode in England, which was a secret to his most intimate friends, should be known to her.—I own, Mr. Bethel, I wish he had forbore to visit the country, where Geraldine resides, with an air of secrecy;—for though she assures me, (and she is truth and candour itself,) that in doing so, he was actuated by very different motives from those which my mother's informer has dared to impute to him; yet assuredly, such a circumstance happening

to a young and beautiful woman, apart from her husband, will receive, from the generality of the world, a very different interpretation."

It would be difficult to describe with the pen, the manner and voice in which Fanny Waverly uttered this—her countenance I could not see, for she turned from me, and had her handkerchief to her eyes.—Her emotion was however extremely affecting; I did all I could to re-assure her, and promised, that I would see Geraldine composed and easy, before I left her, in her new lodgings, (where she was expected that afternoon,) and give early intelligence of her state of health and spirits to the anxious Fanny.

"Alas" said she, "it is all the comfort I shall have about her to day, for my mother has made an engagement with the Fairfax's, from which, I have in vain attempted to excuse myself—pardon me, Mr. Bethel—they are relations of yours, and are soon to become relations of mine, but I shall never

love them, for I detest pride and selfishness wherever I meet them; above all, I detest them, when they are poorly concealed under the ill managed affectation of refined sentiment, and superior information.

I could not forbear a smile at the little asperity, with which this sarcasm, (you will call it truth) was uttered; and soon after, as Fanny had made some excuse to her mother, which she feared, would be detected as an excuse, if she staid too long, we parted, and I prepared for the painful scene I was to go through in the afternoon; I thought it however best, as I was known to be so much connected with you, not to wait her arrival at the inn; but to leave a note for her, entreating permission to attend her, as early as she could admit me.

About half past five o'clock, I received from her, the following card.

“Mrs. Verney is infinitely obliged to Mr. Bethel, for his early and most welcome attention; being unable from indis-

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position, to remain at the Bear without great inconveniences, she is already removed to her lodgings in Milsom-street, where she expects, with impatience, the satisfaction of seeing Mr. Bethel."

I hastened thither instantly; and was shewn into a small dining-room, where I saw the two eldest of her lovely children playing on the carpet; the door of the adjoining room was a-jar, and I had hardly spoken to George, before Geraldine entered.

Such an expression of despondence and woe was on her countenance, that I started as I saw her—She forced, however, a melancholy smile, as she held out her hand to me; and said, in a faltering voice, "This is kind indeed, and like my friend Mr. Bethel."

I endeavoured, in my turn, to speak cheerfully; but it would not do—She waved her hand for me to take a chair, but seemed afraid of trusting her voice with another sentence.—There was evidently such a painful struggle to conceal

her agitation and check her tears, that to have seen her weep would have been less affecting.—I expressed my fears, that she was a good deal fatigued by her journey—She answered, “I am, indeed; travelling with three very young children, with only one servant, and in some uneasiness of mind, has been altogether a little too much for me—The sight of a friend like you, Mr. Bethel, is, however, reviving; and makes me as much amends as any thing can now make me, for the want of kindness I experience from my own family.” This cruel reflection was insupportable—her voice failed her; and she drew her handkerchief from her pocket, to conceal the tears she could no longer restrain.

After yielding to them a moment, however, she endeavoured again to repress them; and said inarticulately, “I beg your pardon, for attempting to conceal any thing from you; and to distress you by the sight of sorrow that must appear extravagant—But read this letter from my mother

mother—from my only parent—from her, in compliance with whose wishes .—” She could not go on—I took the letter from her hand, which I could willingly have pressed to my heart—I was too much agitated to read it very distinctly then; but I enclose it to you, for she gave me leave to put it in my pocket.

“ You see, Mr. Bethel,” said she, when she regained her voice — “ You see, that the coldness of my family is not judged punishment enough; but that they accuse that most generous and noble-minded of men, your friend Desmond, of attachments—of views, which, I am sure, he never entertained; and thus rob me of the only friend, except yourself, that my cruel destiny has left me—But I will submit to it in silence—I will not trouble my mother with the unwelcome sight of a daughter, whose misfortunes are her faults—I will go—but yet I know not whither!—they will allow me, I hope, a short respite here till I can determine.”

I need not, surely, say to you, that I said every thing I could imagine, to console this lovely, injured mourner—I told her that her sister had sent me, to assure her of *her* unfailing tenderness, and of her determination, that no injunctions from her mother, should prevent her seeing her the next day. I endeavoured to persuade her, that the ideas Mrs. Waverly had taken up about you, were owing to the forgeries of malice and malignity—that she would soon be convinced of their falsehood—and that all would be well.—She shook her head—“ Ah ! never ! ” said she, “ in this world for me—my destiny cannot be changed—it must, therefore, be supported—But, however, no state of mind, so cruelly painful as that I have endured since I received, two hours ago, my mother’s letter, can last long.”

A silence of some moments ensued, for I had exhausted every proper topic of consolation. At length, she said—“ Notwithstanding all this, I am so conscious of
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the rectitude of my own heart; and so perfectly convinced of Mr. Desmond's honor and integrity towards me, that I shall not affect to have any reserve about naming him; for to do so might intimate that I blushed at knowing how highly he honours me with his esteem, which I rather glory in. Have you heard from him, Mr. Bethel, since he has been in Kent?—Is he well?—And does he talk of returning soon to France?”—I replied, “that I was not, at present, informed of your intentions; but should, probably, soon see you at your own house; where, I imagined, you would stay, at least, a month.”—She sighed—“We shall lose you then,” said she to me; “that loss will be irreparable.” I assured her, that, as long as my continuing at Bath would be of use to her, in the smallest degree, I would not suffer even my wish to see you, after so long an absence, to have any weight with me.—I could have added, that I knew I could not oblige you so

much as in remaining where my presence could contribute to her satisfaction.

She was not able to thank me; or, for some time, to speak—Recovering herself, she said—“you are too good, Mr. Bethel!—The voice of kindness and sympathy, overcomes me more than the cold and cruel reserve of my family, because I cannot help making continual comparisons!—My Fanny!—she too forsakes me!—yet I would not have her disobey my mother, however I may languish to see her.”

Again I assured her, her sister would fly to her, at all hazards, the moment it was possible; and after some farther conversation, I had, at length, the pleasure of leaving her much more composed than I had found her.—She spoke, however, with extreme anxiety, about her youngest child, whose constitution is, she fears, quite ruined by the uneasiness that has been preying upon her own, while she has been nursing him.

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As to Geraldine herself, she looks most beautiful—less dazzling than she once was—she is a thousand times more interesting than in the most luxuriant bloom of early beauty—I never saw a face that gave me so much pleasure in the contemplation of it, as her's does; and yet I have seen many more regular—The reason of this, I believe, is, that there is so much sense blended with so much sweetness in every expression of her countenance.—I have often seen both separately; but, in faces, where one predominates, there is frequently a want of the other—Her form, too, is, in my opinion, the very perfection of feminine loveliness; yet it seems to owe all its charms to her mind—the dignity of the one heightens every grace of the other. See! if your inexorable Mentor, as you have often called me, is not writing an eulogium on the very charms for which he condemns your adoration—But I am now too well convinced that nothing can divest you of your attachment;

and the justice of my praises cannot encrease it—All I shall henceforward attempt to do, will be to keep it within those bounds of prudence, which you cannot pass without doing the most fatal injury to its object.—Prudence in which, my friend, you most cruelly failed in your journey into Wales.

I own I am much disturbed at the information Mrs. Waverly has obtained of the circumstances of your abode in a place, where I thought it quite improbable that you could be known. I am still more disturbed at the construction she has been taught to put on your visit.

I have just had a note from Miss Waverly, she will be with her sister to-morrow morning at seven o'clock—This evening, her mother has taken care to render it impossible.

I will write again in a few days, till when and ever I remain,

My dear friend, your's faithfully,

E. BETHEL,

LETTER IV.

TO MRS. VERNEY.

Bath, Thursday.

DAUGHTER VERNEY,

I HEAR, with great concern, and indeed amazement, of your intended arrival in this place. I wish you had acted more prudently, as well as properly; and am surprised, that in your situation, you should think it right or becoming, to receive visits from Mr. Desmond, or any other person, not authorised by your family; and, at the same time, refuse to comply with your husband's request, in going abroad, under the care of the nobleman, whom he had engaged to see you safe to him—I am very much alarmed for the consequences of all this; and, indeed, those of my particular friends, whose judgment I rely on, have given me great reason

son to be so, by the representations they have made to me of the opinion the world will form upon such conduct—Encouragement or countenance from me, it will not receive; and, as to supporting the expence, it is quite out of my power—You will do well, therefore, to consider, whether you had not better determine to go to France, where, I understand, your husband is likely to be handsomely supported, till his affairs can be settled; and to accept the polite and handsome offer made by the foreign Duke, before it is too late—You remember, to be sure, as you are fond to poetry, the line your poor father, on former occasions, has quoted from Milton or Shakespeare, or some of your favorite authors—

“ The wife, where danger or dishonor lurks,
Seemliest and safest by her husband stays.”

At present, your separation from Mr. Verney is altogether voluntary, and, therefore, highly improper; and quite inconsistent

sistent with the prudent line of behaviour, which I expect from a daughter of mine—such, indeed, as lays me under the necessity of saying to you, though it may appear harsh, that I cannot let my daughter Frances see you, nor consent to receive you myself, till I find you have determined to embrace the proper conduct of going to your husband—as to do otherwise, would be to encourage both, in what is in my own opinion, quite wrong; and give fresh occasion for scandal, which has begun to be too busy already.

I hope Mr. Desmond will oblige me in forbearing, for the future, to interfere in the affairs of my family; and that I may not hear him named again in the same breath with any of them, unless on quite a different footing.

I desire your speedy determination, as to going abroad; and when you have taken a becoming resolution, you shall not find me backward in kindness.—My circumstances are, at present, much circumscribed,

scribed, by the necessity I am under to do my best in figure and appearance for your brother's approaching marriage, with a woman, whose fortune and connexions are so proper and desirable for him—Nevertheless, I will strain a point to grant you any little accommodation for your journey—though, certainly, not to support you in a wilful separation from your husband, which nothing can excuse, and no mother, who has a due sense of propriety, will encourage.

As to your three children, I am glad to hear from Frances, that you have weaned the little one, as that takes off one objection to your travelling. You may leave them all very properly, with some careful person; and, if they are near this place, I will see now and then, that they are well looked after.

I am (if so your conduct shall allow me to subscribe myself)

Your affectionate mother,

ELIZABETH WAVERLY.

DESMOND.

47

LETTER V.

TO MR. BETHEL.

Sedgewood, Kent, June 24th, 1791.

WITH what calmness, my dear Bethel, do you recount a scene, that I cannot read, without feeling something like frenzy. With how few remarks do you enclose me a letter that deprives me of all patience and — But it is the mother of Geraldine that writes it, (at least, she has always passed for such, though one would be tempted to fancy there was an exchange made in her infancy) and I will not exclaim against her; but only entreat you to let me know, by the return of the post, whether the lovely persecuted being, to whom it is addressed, has taken any resolution in consequence of it. I dread, least that tender and dutiful sweetness of character, to
which

which her wretched marriage was owing, should again betray her into this detested measure ; and that her ideas of obedience to her odious mother, and her worthless husband, should precipitate her into the very abyfs of wretchedness.—My hope is, that the proposal—so cool a proposal too, that she should leave her children, will rouse that proper spirit of resistance against usurped and abused authority, which, for herself, she would not, perhaps, exert.—To leave her children, to go herself to such a husband, escorted by a man, to whom, I am persuaded, he has sold her ; and all this, by the authority of an unfeeling old woman, who is solicitous for her fame forsooth !—and displeased at my having called at her door, when I happened to be in a same neighbourhood.

One is half tempted to fly out of the world in a fit of despair, when one considers how the farce of it is carried on, and what wretches exist in it, whose whole business seems to be to destroy the few comforts,

forts, and embitter the few pleasures which it affords.—I am totally unable to guess to whose cursed officiousness it is owing, that this prudish, narrow-minded old woman (I cannot keep my temper with her) is so well informed of my having been at Bridge-foot; a secret I kept even from you, and fancied was unknown to all the world; since I had the precaution not to take even a servant with me—I could execrate, with a most hearty good will, her informers, whoever they may be; and wish I could draw a drop of blood from their hearts, for every tear this diabolical business has drawn from the eyes of Geraldine.—But a heart that can wantonly injure *her*, can have no warm blood in it—It must be some disappointed prude, or uncharitable pedant.—I know none of either description at all likely to interfere with me—yet, if I could discover them, I should be tempted to expose them to something worse than this apostrophe—

“I tell

" I tell thee, damned priest,

" A ministering angel shall my sister be

" When thou liest howling!"—*

It is in vain, my dear Bethel, for me to attempt calling off my mind a moment from Geraldine; and were it not that my presence might expose her to a repetition of these odious suspicions, I should be now at Bath; whither you knew it was fully my purpose to go when I quitted Herefordshire, had not she been driven thither, and made my going just at the same time improper; though I was then far from dreaming of all the occasion there existed for my precaution.

As it is, I must remain here, at least, till I have your answer; which I entreat you to forward to me as soon as possible; for, till it comes, I can determine on nothing—and there is no situation so irksome as the state of suspense I am now in; certain, that however it terminates, I must

* Shakespeare.

be

be wretched, but dreading what is of infinitely greater moment, that Geraldine may be yet more miserable.

Do not encourage me, Bethel, in the idea of her having for me personal regard—I, who know and adore the unfulfilled purity of her mind, know, that the admission of such a sentiment, however involuntary, would render her unhappy; and I would not obtain all the happiness imagination can conceive, at the expence of giving her heart one reproachful pang.—You think this asseveration inconsistent with my rashness, in concealing myself in the neighbourhood of her late residence—But besides that I had other motives for my journey thither, than it is in my power to communicate to you; I protest to you that had not chance thrown me in her way, I should not have *then* seen her.—This appears contradictory and ridiculous, but I must be content to let you call it so.

How

How tedious, how irksome is the sort of life I have led the little time I have been here.—I find that the locality of our attachments depend upon the persons that surround us, rather than the places where we are happy—I have preferred this small estate as a residence, from my infancy; and here the most joyous hours of my life were past.—When I became my own master, I hastened hither; and, as I repaired the old house, and saw the roads mended, and the fences got in order, as I planted my shrubs, and gave directions for the care of my timber, procured modern comforts within the house, and put every thing without in order, a thousand agreeable images returned of my former pleasures; and with the sanguine eye of youthful expectation, I looked forward to greater pleasures yet to come.

I shall meet, said I to myself, as I indulged these charming illusions, with some lovely and amiable young woman, whose taste is congenial with my own—One,

who will be more pleased with this place, because I love it, than with my other house; which, though larger and handsomer, is not in so beautiful a country, and to which I have no particular attachment. — That, therefore, I will let, and reside here altogether; and, when the naturally delicious situation is gradually improved, and a new room built for my books, I think, that with such a woman as my imagination has formed, I shall here find happiness — if happiness be ever the lot of humanity.

While I was looking out, therefore, for this “last best gift of heaven,” I was as busy in my improvements, and as delighted with my future paradise, as ever projector was with some favourite scheme that was to procure him millions. — Alas! destiny, inexorable destiny, was at work not only to destroy my lovely visions, but to embitter their destruction by shewing me that they might have been all realized. — At this period — near four years ago, I first saw

Mrs.

Mrs. Verney; then only a few months married, and brought down by her husband, for the first time, to his Kentish villa.—The beauty of her person, though that person is exactly what my fancy would form as the most lovely and perfect, made no immediate or deep impression.—She was a married woman, and her beauty was not, therefore, to be considered by a man, looking out, as I was, for a wife, and who never harboured an idea of seducing the wife of another—Yet, perhaps, I listened with more pleasure to her sentiments, because she was eminently handsome.—I had listened but a little, before I discovered, to my utter confusion, that she was exactly the woman with whom I could be happy; and, in a few months, I found that I could never now be happy at all, for that she could not be mine, and I could think with pleasure of no other woman.

For above two years, under pretence of trying to reason myself out of this prepossession, I cherished it.—The unaffected

ease

ease and innocent freedom with which she treated me, fed the flame that was consuming me; but she was totally unconscious of it—And, though I could see that Mr. Verney was altogether unworthy of her, that she was but too sensible of it; and had been married to him merely because it was the will of her family. Believe me, Bethel, that I honoured highly that noble resolution with which I saw she not only bore, but tried to make the best of her lot; and never, in any one instance, attempted to raise a sentiment in my own favour, to the prejudice of the affection which she believed she ought, and which she tried to feel, for her husband—That husband, who valued so little the blessing he possessed, that, after he had once gratified his pride, by shewing to his libertine friends the most beautiful woman of the time, as his wife, was accustomed to leave her for weeks and months together; and, while he was dissipating his fortune in every species of extravagant folly, she

was either alone at Linwell, or had no other companion than Fanny Waverly, then a wild girl, between sixteen and seventeen—just emerging from the nursery into the delights of succeeding her sister as a beauty: and who, though heartily rejoiced to escape from her mother, seemed then not to be so advanced in understanding, as to be a companion for her, though there was not the difference of two years in their ages.

It was at these periods when Geraldine was so much in solitude at Linwell, that my attachment took so deep root.—I found by her preferring the country even at seasons when she might have been in London—I found by her taste for reading, for drawing, for domestic pleasures, that she was, in every respect, the very woman my imagination had formed.—The more I saw of her, the more I felt this—yet could I not determine to quit her till your remonstrances and some fears, least with Verney's encreasing follies, my regret and murmurings might encrease

also

also, and to her prejudice, determined me to go abroad—How successful that expedient has been in regard to curing me of my passion for her, you know too well—What ill consequences have otherwise attended it, I hope you will never know at all.

But I was about to relate the effect that my former friendly and innocent intercourse with this lovely woman, has on my present frame of mind; and how it touches, with peculiar sadness, every object around me.

This place, though more than six miles from Linwell, and almost as far again from Hartfield, is yet, you know at that distance, which in the country constitutes near neighbourhood.—I was at school at Eaton with Verney, and though on our entrance into life, his pursuits and mine were so different, that no intimacy could subsist between us, yet our acquaintance was of course renewed, when we both came to settle in this country.—I visited

equally at the house, whether he was at home or no; and, at length, I was restrained only by my fears of injuring the reputation of Geraldine, from seeing her every day; for all other society was insipid or disgusting.

At that time Geraldine rode on horseback, or drove her sister in a cabriole; and, as she was fond of gardening, I sometimes used to solicit her opinion on the alterations I was making—and when she approved what I had directed, or gave me any idea of her own, I pursued my plans of improvement with redoubled alacrity.—Her presence gave to every object a charm which I now look for in vain!—And the groups of shrubs which were then planted by her direction, now grow and flourish, as if to remind me only of the happiness I have lost—a happiness which one half the world would call chimerical, and the other half absurd and ridiculous—but which nevertheless *was comparative happiness*; for when I knew I could see her

at

at any time in an hour, and that I should pass an hour or two near her, twice or thrice in the course of the week; I repressed, if I could not entirely destroy, the regret which arose on reflecting that her life was dedicated to another.

I have been most decidedly miserable ever since I have been here; every body tires me, and business or conversation alike disgust and teize me.—I fancied that after an absence of twelve months, the former might, for a time, occupy my mind; but Best, who you know I left as a steward, is so intolerably slow and stupid, that it is quite impossible for me to attend to his accounts and his details—however he is very honest, and all seems right enough—and I have given him his discharges.—The good folks of the neighbourhood have persecuted me every morning—post-chaises and whiskies, and cavaliers, have beset my door.—Some of these worthy people I have seen, because I happened to meet them in the grounds, and they were so happy at

my return, and so full of obliging hopes that I was coming to live among them, and be a good neighbour, that really I was concerned to disappoint them; especially certain amiable gentlewomen between fifty and sixty, who have daughters between twenty-and-thirty, and who are so good as to be particularly solicitous for my settling in their neighbourhood.—One of these, an acquaintance it seems of my mother's, came in a solemn embassy, like a dowager queen of Sheba, to visit me, whom she praised quite into a Solomon; but, as she piques herself upon speaking her mind freely (and is of course the terror of all her acquaintance) she told me she should not spare my faults; for she loved me for the sake of her old friend, my dear mother, and knew I had too much sense not to understand she spoke out of sincere regard; when she pointed out some errors in my conduct, which so good and promising a young man, *one who was such a credit to the times*, would do well to correct.

I cannot

I cannot say I much liked this exordium—Conscience told me I had committed errors enough, which such a sybil might strike at; but I felt the most uneasy in a matter where my conscience totally acquitted me.—I figured to myself that she might allude to my journey into Wales; and, I believe, my countenance betrayed my apprehensions, for she cried—“Oh! but my dear Sir, don’t blush so—I shall not touch upon family secrets (nodding significantly)—No, no—I only mean to ask you, how you *can* like to go so often to that odious France, which, at all times, was the ruin of all the fine young men that ever went there in my memory, and now must be much worse; for, I understand, they have neither church nor king—neither money nor bread—a sad race of people always; and nothing ever seemed to me so absurd as sending an English gentleman among them.—As to you, I don’t, indeed, see any great change in you yet, except that you have lost your English complexion—but I heartily hope

you'll go no more—but sit down quietly and creditably at home, with a good discreet young woman for your wife, and have no hankerings after these foreign doings.—There was a report got about, that you had either been married in France, or got a French mistress—I am heartily glad to find there's no truth in such a rumour—Indeed I always said—No, no, says I, Mr. Desmond, if I understand him at all, has better notions—Take *my* word for it, who have known him ever since he was an infant, that he has good sound honest English principles at bottom, and loves his own country, and his own country folks, and we shall see him come and settle among us—a yeoman of Kent: which is better than any French duke or marquis, or grandee of them all.”—To the truth of this position I heartily assented; and felt relieved that nothing had alarmed this truly British matron, more than a friendly dread of my having imported

imported a French mistress.—She did not, however, end her very long visit, till she had again most seriously exhorted me to put away all foreign vanities, and come to see her.—She assured me her daughter, Dorothy, was returned from visiting her aunt in the North, quite altered for the better in her health, and longing to see her old play-fellow, Mr. Desmond—and that her youngest, Marianne, was grown out of my knowledge, and quite a fine young woman.—What could defend an heart thus strongly beset, but a predilection, against which neither Dorothy nor Marianne can contend?

My dear Bethel, I expect your next letter with impatience, that is beyond the power of words to describe; five days must pass before I can be relieved—but keep me not in suspense an hour longer.—Day after day I linger here in tortures, even greater than you are aware of; I rise

in a morning only to count the moments, till the return of the messenger I send for letters; and then to become splenetic for the rest of the day; if he does not bring me letters from you or from some other person who can name the situation of Geraldine:

She did, indeed, promise to write to me herself; and I have expected her performance of that promise with torturing inquietude—But now I can too well account for her having failed in it; and, since these infernal gossips have raised such suspicions, I shall not hear from her at all.—Oh! I could curse them—but you will have no patience if I suffer myself to relapse into the useless execrations of impotent rage.

I wander about like a wretched restless being—now trying to sit down to books of which I know not one word, though I pore over them for hours; now hiding myself in the woods from the horrible
impor-

importunity of visitors whose kindness I cannot return.

Relieve me soon, dear Bethel, from this miserable state, or in a fit of desperation, I may set out for Bath.

LIONEL DESMOND:

D 6 LET.

LETTER VI.

TO MR. DESMOND.

Bath, June 28th, 1791.

I HAVE this moment your letter of the 24th, which distresses, but does not amaze me. I expect to have you enacting very soon the part of an English Werter; for you seem far gone in his species of insanity; and I fear what I have to say to you to-day, will only feed this unhappy frenzy.—You tell me, however, that if you do not hear from me exactly at the time you expect, (without ever considering that many circumstances, quite immaterial to the cause of your solicitude, may prevent my being so very punctual) you may, perhaps, set off for Bath, in a fit of desperation—I write, therefore; for though sure to inflict pain, by all I have to say, it will
(if

(if you have yet a shadow of reason left) prevent a greater evil—Your coming now to Bath would be absolute madness; and absolutely useless as to any service you could render Geraldine—If, in this disposition of mind, you can attend to the most extraordinary events, that do not immediately belong to its cause, you, perhaps, may have heard the news of the flight of the King of France and his family, which arrived here yesterday—The same post brought letters to Geraldine from her husband, written in great haste, and with great exultation.—He seems to doubt, from the purport of de Romagnecourt's letter, after his first interview, whether she would accompany him; and therefore sends to the Duke's agent, in London, a letter to her, containing more positive injunctions; and bills for sixty pounds, with which, in case the Duke should be departed, he directs her instantly to set out for Paris, by way of Dieppe and Rouen; and, if she *must* have it so, to bring her children; but,

but, at all events, to begin her journey immediately—He tells her, that though he is, at present, in Austrian Flanders, measures are so arranged, that his friends will, in a very short time, return in triumph to Paris, where he is assured of a splendid support; and the immediate means of retrieving his affairs—This letter, which is couched in the most positive and forcible terms he could devise, was forwarded by the agent of the Duke, who, it appears, knew that Geraldine was at Bath.—On the receipt of it, she sent for me; and putting the letter into my hands, sat down, and fell into an agony of tears.

I asked her, as soon as I recovered a little from my surprize and concern, what she meant to do?—"I go," replied she—"I have now no longer a reason against it—at least, none that will be attended to; and I must obey—"

"Good God!" exclaimed I, in distress I could not conceal, "is this a time to order you, unguarded and alone, to undertake

take such a journey ; and to enter a capital, which must, from the present circumstances, be in consternation and confusion"—If you must go, I cannot bear the thoughts of your going unprotected."—" And yet," said she, " that is the very circumstance that determines me ; for, with such protection as Mr. Verney had before chosen for me, I would not have gone."—She sighed deeply, but dried her eyes.—" It is over," added she—" I took the liberty of troubling you to come to me, Mr. Bethel, to ask your friendly advice ; but I now see, on a moment's farther consideration, that I have but one part to take ; and that I have done wrong to hesitate."

" Pardon me," replied F—" I rather think, my dear Madam, you will be more wrong, should you determine too hastily. Does your sister—does your mother know of this letter ; and the *command* it contains ?"

" My sister does ; for she was here when I received it half an hour ago—She left me to acquaint my mother with it, whom
I have

I have not yet been permitted to see—But, as she has kept me at a distance from her, because she conceived displeasure at my not consenting to go before, she will, undoubtedly, have a stronger reason to insist on my going now.—My brother, Mr. Waverly, has, at last, determined on all the preliminaries and preparations for his marriage, which has been so long in suspense—It is to be concluded on immediately—I am, I know, in the way; they can neither invite me to the joyous festivity with pleasure, or leave me out with decency.—I have now money to go abroad, which my mother will insist upon my using for the purpose my husband designed it; and *she* will be relieved from the apprehensions which I know she has been under, least she should be compelled to advance money for my support here.—Against all these reasons on her part, which she will enforce by the powerful words, *duty* and *obedience*—What have I to offer?—My fears; they will be treated as chimerical—
(nor,

(nor, in fact, do I entertain any) My reluctance ! that will be imputed to very unworthy and very false motives—In a word, though I will await Fanny's return, before I begin to make actual preparations for my immediate journey, I am perfectly assured, that my mother's orders will enforce those of Mr. Verney ; and that I must go."

At this instant, Fanny Waverly, her eyes swollen, and the tears still streaming down her cheeks, entered the room ; and throwing herself into the arms of Geraldine, sobbed aloud, and hid her face in her bosom—Geraldine, by a glorious effort of resolution, instead of yielding to the anguish, under which I could see she was ill able to support herself, tried to soothe and tranquillize her sister.—“ Come, come, my Fanny,” said she, “ be composed—I knew, before you went, the message with which you would return—I, therefore, am prepared for it ; and I entreat you not to let it thus affect you.”

The

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The

The agonizing grief of the one, and the tender fortitude of the other, were, to me, equally affecting; and, as I contemplated one sister weeping in the arms of the other, who, by a painful restraint, exerted that fortitude, not to add to her afflictions; I was on the point of taking them both in my arms, and swearing to defend and protect them with my life and fortune.—The scene, however, was too distressing to be endured long—Fanny continued weeping too much to be able to deliver her mother's message; and Geraldine, who had led her to a chair, hung over her, supporting her head, and holding her hands, with *such a* look!—*She*, however, did not now shed a tear; but her paleness, her trembling, and the expressive look she threw towards me, explained, too clearly, what passed in her heart.—At this moment, the servant, who was not aware of this afflicting interview, entered with the three children—At the sight of them, I saw that Geraldine's resolution was about to forsake her; and when
the

the little boy ran up to Fanny, and entreated her not to cry, she became absolutely convulsed; and Geraldine, after an ineffectual struggle of a moment, hastily left the room, and waved her hand for the maid and the children to follow her.

I was then alone with Fanny Waverly; but I knew not how to attempt pacifying the violence of her emotions—She seemed, indeed, incapable of hearing me—I approached her, however, and took her hand.

“You injure yourself,” said I, “and your sister, by thus giving way to immoderate sorrow—Command yourself, my dear Miss Waverly, for her sake; and tell me, I beseech you, if I can be of any use in mitigating distress, which, from my soul, I lament.”

“Oh! Mr. Bethel!” answered she inarticulately, “my mother is so cruel—so very cruel to Geraldine, that it breaks my heart—She has heard the purport of Verney’s letter; and ordered me back to say, that it was not only her opinion that she ought

ought to set out, but her *command* that she should instantly prepare for doing so; on which condition alone she will receive, and give her her blessing.—I own I remonstrated rather earnestly with my mother, but I was so far from obtaining any mitigation, that I was very severely reproved for daring to question the propriety of her decision; and bade to observe, that if I presumed to attempt influencing my sister to ~~a~~ contrary to her duty, so clearly pointed out, it would be at my own peril; and that I must, in that case, be content to share the fate that must soon overwhelm my sister; but, indeed, Mr. Bethel, continued she, it is not *that* threat that should deter or frighten me, if I were not too sure that I should be a burthen to Geraldine, and only encrease her difficulties.”

“Do not, however, encrease them now, my amiable friend,” said I, “by these deep expressions of anguish—I do assure you, that your sister had anticipated all the purport of the message that distresses you; and
that

that it will shock her less than you imagine—Try, therefore, to recover yourself—tell her the truth, and assist her in forming such a resolution as is best—I *own* I think that is, to brave the worst that can happen by staying; and to refuse to set out, at least, till she hears Mr. Verney is at Paris to receive her.”

As if relieved, by hearing that this was my opinion, and in the hope that it would influence her sister, Fanny now flew to her—She and her servant were only in the next room with the children; I waited, a moment, the issue of the conference, and a violent burst of weeping assured me, too well, that it would be most affecting—This, however, was from Fanny Waverly; for, in five or six minutes, Geraldine re-entered the dining-room, with forced serenity; she even tried to smile, when she said, “this dear girl is so unfortunately full of sensibility and affection, that it is impossible to pacify her—She fancies I go to meet anarchy and murder in France; and

and on seeing me packing up mine and my children's cloaths, that I may be ready to set out to-morrow, she has relapsed into the wildest expressions of sorrow—I wish you would try, Mr. Bethel, since she will listen to and believe you, to reason her out of these groundless apprehensions.”

“I wish,” said I, “that I *could* set about that without forfeiting my sincerity, but, upon my honor, I do not think, and therefore cannot say, her apprehensions are groundless.”

“I, however, have no fears, Mr. Bethel—The French, of whatsoever party I may fall among, will not hurt a woman and children!—On admitting it possible, that in some of those popular commotions, that are, certainly, likely to convulse, for some time, a kingdom just bursting into freedom from the grasp of the most oppressive tyranny, I might be involved; (which is extremely unlikely) Good God! what have I to fear?—Not death! assuredly; for there is hardly one situation, in which I

can *now* be placed, to which death would not be preferable.—I will be very sincere, my good friend, and say honestly, that after what I know, and what I *suspect* of Mr. Verney, I had rather meet death than be in his power—I had rather meet it than my mother's unkindness—ininitely rather, than to know that I and my poor little ones (her voice almost failed her) should be a burthen to *her*, who is so unwilling to bear it, even for a little while.—Has then death any terrors for me? and can one who fears not death shrink from danger?—If I get among the wildest collection of those people, whose ferocity arises not from their present liberty, but their recent bondage, is it possible to suppose they will injure *me*, who am myself a miserable slave, returning with trembling and reluctant steps, to put on the most dreadful of all fetters?—Fetters that would even destroy the freedom of my mind.” I was excessively struck with the manner in which she spoke this; nor did I imagine that her soft features

tures and dove-like eyes, could have assumed such an expression of spirit—She saw, I believe, I was surprized—“Why,” said I, “do you put on these fetters, if you feel them to be so insupportable?”

“Because,” returned she, “it is my *duty*; and while I fulfil that, I can always appeal to a judge, who will not only acquit, but reward me, if I act up to it—The more terrible the task, the greater the merit I assume in fulfilling it; besides that, my mother’s inhumanity has lessened its horrors.—

———— ‘Thou’dst shun a bear;
But if thy flight lay towards the roaring sea,
Thou’dst meet the bear in the mouth.’ *

“Well! but,” said I, “not to speak of Mr. Verney, whose conduct is in every way unpardonable; not to speak of the dangers that may attend journeying towards Paris, at present; and which may,

* Shakespeare.

perhaps, be partly imaginary—Give me leave to ask, how are you able, with three young children, and only a maid servant, to encounter the fatigues of so long a journey?—I have heard you say you are excessively affected by sea sickness; and that nothing overcomes you more than hurry; yet here are you about to encounter both the one and the other, with only a young, helpless English girl as a servant, who will be terrified to death every step she takes.

“ Ah! Mr. Bethel!” replied Geraldine, shaking her head mournfully, “ you oblige me again to use a quotation—

————— ‘ When the mind’s free,
The body’s delicate ; the tempest in my mind,
Doth from my senses take all feeling else,
Save what beats there.*”

“ What then,” said I, “ for God’s sake tell me—what is your resolution? and in what way can I render more easy, any that you will absolutely adopt?”

* Shakespeare.

Vo L. III.

E

“ My

“ My resolution, my good friend, is, to set out very early to-morrow for France, by the *route* Mr. Verney has directed—If there is a possibility of getting, by that time, a female servant, who speaks a little French ; and of hiring a man servant, on whom I can depend, I will do both ; in these instances, perhaps, your friendly assistance may be exerted.”

“ And you are positively determined to go ?”

“ So positively, that I have sent to enquire whether I can have a coach here ; if not, I must have two post-chaises, which will be much less convenient ; and if I cannot here procure the servants I want, I must take the chance of getting them either from London, whither I shall write this evening, or at Brighthelmstone, where I shall embark ; and to which place I shall go, by way of Salisbury and Chichester, without going round by London.”

I now saw, that the most essential service I could render our lovely, unhappy friend,

was

was to set out instantly in quest of such persons and accommodations as she wanted; I knew that it was absolutely necessary for her to have a coach, and not trust to French vehicles—It was equally necessary to procure for her a trusty man servant.—These, therefore, I set about finding; and by a singular piece of good fortune, I found, at the livery-stable where I applied, a very good coach, that was left there to be sold, by the executors of a gentleman, who had it made new for his journey to Bath, where he died soon after his arrival—It was fitted up with many conveniencies for an invalid under the necessity of travelling; and was exactly suited to carry such a family as that for whose use I now purchased it; ordering the man, who had the sale of it, to tell Mrs. Verney, “that he had directions to let it at a price he named; which was to be paid on returning it;” for that I had otherwise managed the matter, was, of necessity, a secret.

It was infinitely more difficult to procure her a servant, and it was near one o'clock in the morning when I gave up the hope of satisfying myself in this respect.—I could not, however, determine to let her go either without one, or with one with whose character I was not perfectly satisfied; and therefore, after some deliberation, I resolved to send my own man, Thomas Wrightson, with her; as I can do very well without him, till I can find some proper person to send over to her, or hear of her having provided herself with one there.—Thomas, indeed, does not speak any French to signify, though he was once at Paris with me; but he is very honest and active; and, upon my proposing it to him, he said—"that though upon no other account whatever he would quit me, unless my honour was pleased to discharge him; yet, for such a lady as Mrs. Verney, in such a time to be sure, he would go through fire and water, by night or by day."—I assured him there
would

would be very little water, and, I believed, no fire whatever to go through ; and having settled the terms which made it a matter of profit, as well as chivalry to honest Thomas, I dispatched, late as it was, a note to Geraldine, to inform her how this was settled ; and had the pleasure to hear, in an answer written by herself, that she was extremely well satisfied with the arrangements I had made for her ; and had, in the mean time, been lucky in her own endeavours ; having made a fortunate discovery of a person between forty and fifty, who had been a governess at a school at Bath, and was desirous of attending any lady to Mante, of which place she was a native, for the consideration of the expences of her journey. —Geraldine added, that as she had been indefatigable in her preparations, every thing would be ready, and she should depart at eight o'clock the next morning ; when she intended driving to the door of her mother, to take leave of her, and receive the *promised blessing* ; and that she begged

of me to meet her a little without the town, to walk back with Fanny (who was to go so far in the coach with her) and to receive her last acknowledgements, for what she termed, my unexampled friendship.

I knew that much was yet to be done, of which she was not aware.—I arose, therefore, at five o'clock, and had my banker here called; who gave me a letter of credit on Paris for an hundred pounds; and another to a gentleman at Rouen, to entreat his attention to the travellers, in regard to exchanging their money, or any other little office of kindness; and, thus prepared, I waited impatiently for the hour, when the coach which contained our lovely exile, was to overtake me on the road.—I had proceeded near a mile beyond the place of appointment, when it appeared—It stopped on approaching me.—I found only Geraldine, Fanny and the children in it, for that her last conference with her sister and with me might not be interrupted,

interrupted, the two female attendants were ordered to follow so far on foot, and the coach was to stay for them.

I trembled as I drew near the scene I was to pass through—Fanny, her face covered with her handkerchief, was sobbing bitterly—Geraldine was pale and trembling, but an artificial composure, seemed to be the effect of the effort she was obliged to make to support herself, soothe her sister, and attend to her children.—The moment I saw her countenance, I saw too plainly written there, the cruel harshness of her mother, but she tried to speak with steadiness, when she begged of me to get into the coach.—I obeyed; but I was infected with the tender sorrows of the party I found there, and could say nothing to console them.

I had, however, no time to lose in indulging useless sympathy; I took, therefore, out of my pocket, the letters I had obtained.—I told her, that by one, she would find herself entitled to a small credit,

in case she should want it, which would be no inconvenience to me; and her taking it was the only proof I required of that friendship which she had so often declared she favoured me with—That the other letter was to a gentleman at Rouen, who might be serviceable to her on her way—“And now, dear Mrs. Verney,” said I, “unless any thing more can be devised for your service, Miss Waverly and I will say farewell; for this parting, this sad parting, will hurt you too much; and, I fear”—“It is true,” said she, interrupting me, “that it is wiser to part while we are yet able.—Fanny, my most beloved sister, have pity upon yourself and me, and do not destroy me quite by your affection, which is now almost cruelty.”

Poor Fanny threw her arm round her sister's neck, and, with a deep and convulsive sigh, kissed her, but could not speak.—At the same moment Geraldine gave me her hand, on which fell, as I pressed it to my lips, the only tear I have shed for
some

some years; it was cruel to prolong this scene, and, indeed, almost impossible to bear it—I therefore opened the coach-door, leaped out, and Fanny Waverly, disengaging herself from the children with a sort of desperate resolution, followed me.—Geraldine was totally silent, and I dared not look towards her—but the little boy continued to call to his aunt Fanny, and to entreat her not to go from him, till the two women who had, by this time, come up with the coach, were helped in by Thomas; one of them very wisely drew up the coach-window, and on a signal from me, it drove very rapidly away.

I remained standing in the road, supporting Miss Waverly, who was drowned in tears, and choaked by speechless sorrow.—I spoke to her, entreating her to bear, with as much fortitude as she could, a separation that, however painful, would probably be short.—She replied, in a voice broken by sobs—“God knows how that
E 5 may

may be, Mr. Bethel, but I if dared follow my inclinations, it should be short indeed."

"We must none of us," said I, "follow our inclinations, when they are in opposition to our duty, my dear young friend."

"And yet," cried she, indignantly, "such behaviour as I have just now witnessed from Mrs. Waverly towards my sister, ought, methinks, to dissolve all ties of duty."—I was glad that her anger restored her to herself—I knew it was justly excited, but how justly I could not have believed, if Fanny had not, by degrees, described to me the whole scene between her mother and Geraldine.—I will not irritate your mind by relating it; suffice it to say, that pride, avarice, and insensibility, never more effectually united to render a woman detestable; nor did ever angel shew a more decided contrast to an evil spirit, than Geraldine at that trying moment formed to her mother.

Well,

Well, my dear Desmond, it is over!—Geraldine is gone—To night she proposed being at Salisbury, to-morrow at Chichester, and on Saturday at Brighthelmstone, time enough for the packet, which is advertised to sail on the evening of that day.

Before you receive this, therefore, she will be embarked; and, however you may execrate the cruel necessity that has compelled her to such a step, or reprobate as chimerical and ill-founded, that sense of duty which urged her to obey this compulsory mandate of Verney's, you will, now the die is thrown, submit to what is inevitable—and perhaps the certainty that your misfortune is without remedy, (for Geraldine's return to her husband you will certainly consider as a misfortune,) is the only thing that could teach you to bear, or induce you to attempt conquering your regret.—Assure yourself, that as to her journey, she has every accommodation to render it as tolerable as, under such circumstances,

it could be made—The pain of her mind I could not remove, but hope and believe I have exempted her from suffering much personal inconvenience.

And now, Desmond, since I have as gradually as I could, disclosed this sudden and painful transaction, let me speak a word or two from, and of myself.—You are, by this time convinced, that to come hither could answer no purpose as to Geraldine, but it would certainly alarm the old lady, who has got it most invincibly fixed in her imagination, that you have a design upon her daughter, and have influenced her to refuse going to her husband the first time he sent for her.—Fanny Waverly has in vain tried to discover from whom this intelligence came; her mother hears not your name mentioned with patience, and should you now appear here, it is very likely in her *imprudent* *prudence*, to call it pursuing her daughter and insulting the family. It will be cruel too to

poor Fanny, who could only see you either by stealth or by chance—one would be extremely improper, and the other by no means conducive to the restoration of her tranquillity; for it is easy to see she has entertained a partiality for you, which her good sense and her pride have assisted her to conquer, on the conviction that you are in love with her sister—for that you certainly are so, she is, I can perceive perfectly aware, though she carefully avoids ever hinting at it to me.

Coming hither to meet me, is now quite out of the question, as I shall only be here about six days more—long enough, however, to receive a letter from you, which I hope will tell me, that your mind is more subdued to your fortune, than it was when you wrote last; however, that fortune may have become more perverse, and that you have determined to sit down for some months, at least, quietly in Kent, where I hope you will recover your reason.

—Receive

—Receive for that and every good, the
most sincere wishes of,

Your's most truly,

E. BETHEL.

P. S. I shall leave Louisa here, as both
she and Miss Waverly desire it—and shall
return in the Autumn—and then she will
go back with me to Hartfield.

LET.

LETTER VII.

TO MR. BETHEL.

Sedgewood, July 2, 1791.

GERALDINE so suddenly gone! and to meet her husband, who, when she arrives at Paris, will probably not be there as he proposed—as the event that has since happened, the King of France's return, must inevitably make an alteration in those plans, whatever they were, that his noble foreign friends had projected for him—I am in such a state of mind that I know not what I write—But do not, my dear Bethel, hurry from Bath one day sooner on my account, as I have business which will inevitably call me from hence—and I shall set out to-morrow on an absence of a few weeks, perhaps; but as I do not know exactly where I shall be, and
shall

I shall have my letters sent after me as soon as I do know, continue to direct hither. —I am extremely interested for Fanny Waverly (though I am persuaded you are mistaken as to her honouring me with her partial esteem) and most heartily do I wish that you could see her in the same light as you wish me to do—She deserves a better fate than she will probably meet with, if her hateful mother is to dispose of her.—Oh! where at this moment is Geraldine?—to what fatigues and perils may she not be exposed?—I thank you, however, for all your friendly attention to her—Would to heaven I could have been apprized of her going—but that was certainly impossible—and again I thank you for doing all that could be done on such short notice.—Good God! what would have been her situation had you not been at Bath?—I should never have retained my senses, had she departed on such a journey without the accommodations you contrived to collect for her.

If

If I could divert my mind a moment from this uneasy subject, I should call upon you to rejoice with me, my friend, at the calmness and magnanimity shewn by the French people, on the re-entrance of the King into Paris—This will surely convince the world, that the *bloody democracy* of Mr. Burke, is not a combination of the swinish multitude, for the purposes of anarchy, but the association of reasonable beings, who determine to be, and deserve to be, free.—I would ask the tender hearted personages who affect to be deeply hurt at the misfortunes of royalty, whether if this treachery, this violation of oaths so solemnly given, had been successful, and the former government restored by force of arms, the then triumphant monarch and his aristocracy, would, with equal heroism, have beheld the defeat and captivity of the leaders of the people—and whether any indignities would have been thought too degrading, any punishment too severe for them

—Then

—Then would the *King's castles** have been rebuilt, and *lettres de cachet* have re-peopled the dungeons!

I rejoice as a man, that it is otherwise—and I believe and hope, from the present disposition of the people, that a permanent constitution will now soon be established, in which all the power to do good shall be left in the hands of the chief magistrate, but none to become a despot. —Some evils, however, must be felt before this great work can be compleated—and, perhaps, some blood still shed; but when all the ill that has yet happened (allowing even the most exaggerated accounts of it to be as true) is compared with the calamities of only one campaign in America, for a point which at last we did not carry, and ought not to have attempted; I own I am astonished at the effrontery of our ministerial declaimers, who

* Mr. Burke's name for the Bastille.

having

having supported the one, have dared to execrate the other.

Shall you hear of Geraldine?—Are there any hopes of her writing to me?—Did she mention me on the day of her departure?—Oh! what would I not give for one, only one line from her, to say she is safe in France—Yet how can she be safe any where while in the power of such a man as Verney?—And how could her mother compel her to put herself into it a second time?

You need not apprehend my now visiting Bath, against which, at the beginning of your letter, you remonstrate as gravely as if you supposed I should really set out to see where Geraldine *had* been—the evil consequences of it I own I cannot imagine; for, as it is known she is not there, it could hardly be supposed I came after her.—However, as you are so soon leaving it, as I have really business elsewhere, and may, perhaps, soon see you in this part
of

of the world, a journey thither now is quite out of the question.

If you write by the return of the post, perhaps your letter may still find me here, for I am not at all well; and though I have had sometimes thoughts of setting out to-morrow, as I mentioned in the beginning of my letter, yet I now believe it as likely I may defer my journey for some days.

Adieu, my dear Bethel,

Your's ever,

LIONEL DESMOND.

LET.

LETTER VIII.

TO MR. DESMOND.

July 6th, 1791.

ARE you quite candid with me, Desmond?—And are you really going, you know not when, you know not whither?—Is it quite like my friend, even under the influence of this unhappy passion, to be so very unsettled in his plans?—It is, however, more unlike him to be disingenuous!—More unlike him, to take a step the most injurious, that can be devised, to Geraldine!—I mean going to France in pursuit of her—You surely cannot be so indiscreet, nay, I will call it so cruel, as to meditate this.—You tell me, that if I write by the return of the post, you shall, on second thoughts, probably receive my letter at Sedgewood—I write, therefore; and I conjure you, if you read it in England,

let

let nothing induce you to cross the Channel, till you are assured that Geraldine is with her husband, and till there is no longer any danger of those reports gaining ground, which, (I cannot conjecture how,) have certainly got into circulation here of your attachment to her.

On the supposition, therefore, that you foresee all this, and that the indecision and confusion of your last letter, arose, not from any project of this kind, but merely from the painful sensations occasioned by the first shock of Geraldine's departure, I write, as you desire, by the return of the post, and direct my letter to Sedgewood.

To answer first your questions—Geraldine has not yet written to me; but she assured me she would write the moment her embarkation was certain, and again from Dieppe, by the return of the packet.—These letters, therefore, I hourly expect—I have very anxiously watched the wind ever since the day, when it was probable,

able, she would reach the coast, and till Thursday, it has been exactly contrary, and so high, that I am persuaded she did not sail before that day, though, from the change since, I have no doubt but that she is by this time far on her way to Paris.

You enquire, whether, on the day of her departure, Geraldine spoke of you?—Yes! my friend; but it was with that guarded propriety her situation demanded.—She spoke of her obligations to you; she expressed the most earnest wishes for your happiness, and said, “When I am settled in France, if, indeed, I am to be settled, I shall take the liberty of troubling Mr. Desmond with a letter.”—A faint blush trembled on her cheek, and her voice faltered as she added, “He spoke I think, of being soon in France himself, do you think he intends it?”

I replied, that you had talked of it to me in your letter, but that I knew nothing certainly.—I saw that all the consequences of your going when she did, occurred to her,

her, yet, perhaps, she secretly, and without daring to avow it even to herself, wished you might, while she persuaded herself she feared it—To me, however, she spoke of it no more; but simply desired her compliments and good wishes to you almost the moment she bade adieu to me and her sister—This I did not mention to you before, nor should I have done it now, but that it is necessary to be sincere when you question me; yet, as you sometimes protest, though, I think, you are not uniformly consistent in your declarations, that you do not even wish she should feel for you a partiality which, by the consciousness of its impropriety, might render her more unhappy; I wonder you should ask what you do not desire to know.

I thank you for your wishes to promote me to the favor of Miss Waverly, but have you sufficiently considered the difference of our ages—I am, alas! in my fortieth year—I believe Fanny is not two-and-twenty; and if I did not greatly suspect that her
little

little fluttering heart has felt more than mere friendship for you, *I* could never hope to become acceptable to a young woman surrounded as she is, with flattery and admiration; or, admitting it probable, would it be very discreet in me to give Louisa a mother-in-law not above eleven years older than herself—No, my dear Desmond, *I* must not think of nymphs of twenty-one.

Your uncle Danby, who is the most profound politician that frequents the coffee-houses of this news-demanding and news-affording city, has, within this last fortnight, been very solicitously enquiring of me about you; nor could his curiosity relative to your motions, have been superseded by any thing but his greater anxiety about the motions of the King of France—Now he is so entirely engrossed by his lamentations over disappointed treachery, and so concerned that the intended evasion of Louis XVI. which would have plunged France, if not all Europe, into an imme-

diate war, has failed; that he has not a mind capacious enough to attend to your interests too, and therefore is content to let you be as romantic and absurd as you please, till it is decided whether the French will receive their king again, or immediately declare the nation a republic.

It is, indeed, a speculation important enough to occupy a more enlarged and enlightened understanding than that of the good Major; and never were the eyes of the European nations fixed on a more interesting spectacle.

The Major and I differ less on the subject of politics than on any other, though on that we are far from thinking alike; it is, however, the only kind of conversation I can long hold with him; because, in all that relates to common life, there is in his ideas and expressions, a hardness and coarseness that sometimes shocks and always repulses me.—Swift, I think, in one of his most misanthropic humours, says, while he execrates the human race in general, that

that he still loves John and Thomas.—
There is something in Major Danby just
the reverse of this; he would not care if
John and Thomas, with whom he has been
living in habits of friendly intercourse,
were to be hanged to-morrow; but he is
extremely solicitous for the fate of nations
of which he knows not, nor is ever likely
to know one individual—But even there, it
is the princes and nobles of the land, for
whom his solicitude is called forth; for as
for *les gens du commun*, he thinks they are by
no means worth the attention of a man of
sense and fortune; and that the world was
made for those only, to whom chance has
given the means of enjoying a good table,
and certain comforts and conveniences of
life, for which he has a very decided
relish.

Of course, the present arrangements in
France are very obnoxious to him; and he
collects round him a little band of minor
politicians, who have an high opinion of
his sagacity, and who have adopted, from

Mr. Burke, under his auspices, the opinion, that if some fortunate event, (such as the combination of crowned heads) does not restore to the French their former government, there will be a blank in that portion of the map of Europe that was France.

The terrors for the lives of the royal family, which these persons affected to entertain, have now subsided; but the lamentations over their imprisonment, as it is termed, are become more clamorous than ever.—To unprejudiced minds, however, the conduct of the French, on the return of their ill-advised monarch, has certainly something great and noble in it—I own I am one of those who wish that this magnanimity of character may be followed by a steady and well directed pursuit of the present great object, the formation of a constitution, that, without its defects, may unite all the advantages peculiar to that of England, which, even with those flaws and imperfections, is undoubtedly

the

the best in the world—So far, at least, it may be said to deserve that character, as it seems to secure, better than any other, two great objects discordant in their nature, and therefore not often very peaceful neighbours—I mean the dignity of the state, and the privileges of the people—It has not only been long our national boast, but admired and analyzed by foreigners of the most enlarged and enlightened understanding.—You will tell me, perhaps, that it is beautiful in theory, but defective in practice ; and are not even the ordinances of God exposed to a similar objection ?—We have, indeed, a marvellous proof that our constitution has inherent excellence in no common degree ; when we find it, even in the days of luxury and corruption, so far sufficient for all the great purposes of society ; that amidst all our complaints, it may, I believe, be truly asserted, that in no age or country, has there existed a people, to whom general happiness has been more

fairly distributed, than it is among the English of the present day.

I believe you are so far gone, my dear Desmond, in what are called (but, I think, improperly called) the *new doctrines*, that you would contest this opinion with me, were you not just now in a state of mind that renders every other concern, but those of Geraldine, indifferent to you.—I am afraid my friend's patriotism is so inert, at present, that he would not care if all the world were enslaved, so Geraldine was but free.—However, you will recollect, that whenever you are able and willing to enter the lists on the other side, I am ready to meet you with all your natural acuteness, and the aid of your French friends, on this ground; the general good of the British constitution—This, surely, does not lessen, in your mind, my zeal for the happiness of the whole human race—It does not make you suppose, that because I think our form of government good, I do not, there-

fore,

fore, allow, that there may be a better ; nor that I am jealous least a neighbouring nation should find that better.—At the same time, I am compelled to say, that the proceedings of the National Assembly, since the death of Mirabeau, gives me too little reason to believe they will—I dread the want of unanimity—The want of some great leading mind, to collect and condense the patriotic intentions and views of those who really wish only the salvation of their country—The *despotism* of superior ability is, after all, necessary ; and it is the only despotism to which reasonable beings ought to submit.

Enough of politics—Now, again, to domestic concerns—though you give me but little hope, in the vague way in which you write, of meeting you in Kent ; I shall, in a few days, set out on my return home. In leaving this place, after so long a stay, I regret nobody but my fair Fanny Waverly ; yet, indeed, Desmond, I am not in love with her. I shall not, how-

ever, go from hence, till some accounts are obtained of Geraldine, which, whenever they arrive, I will transmit to you by the quickest conveyance, notwithstanding all the confusion of that part of your letter which talks of your address. Again, I ask you, are you acting with your usual ingenuous confidence towards your friend?

E. BETHEL.

LET.

LETTER IX.

TO MRS. VERNEY.

Bath, July 18th, 1791.

WHERE are you, my dear sister? and how shall I quiet my anxiety about you? While Mr. Bethel was here, I could endure it better, because he had patience to listen to my eager, and sometimes childish inquiries, and to convince me, by reason and argument, that there was not time to hear from you, or that a thousand circumstances might arise, from winds and posts, to delay your letters, but now that he has been gone two days, I find myself insupportably wretched, and I feel my wretchedness the more, because I am compelled to conceal it.

My brother was married yesterday, and is departed with his bride for Bexly Hill,

F 5

where

where his mother and mine, with your unhappy Fanny, are to meet them in a few days—I am heartily glad the ceremony is over, and this very important matter, which has so long occupied and agitated my mother, at length arranged. As her son cannot be unmarried, (which he will probably desire to be before the end of the week, from mere fickleness of disposition) she will now fancy him settled in the world, and I hope be more settled herself, though I have lately learned, that Mrs. Fairfax, who, to the last moment, murmured, internally, at giving her daughter to a commoner, (though his fortune reconciled her to the deficiency) is plotting with my mother, and making interest with all her great friends, to procure for Mr. Waverly an Irish peerage—The preamble to the patent will apply with infinite propriety to my brother, when it speaks of *his good services to his country*—However, in the plentiful showers of new coronets which daily fall, one, I doubt not, will find its way

way to his head ; but, I suppose, a great difficulty will be to determine what title he shall assume—Every pretty name, and words of elegant termination, in *vile*, and *wood*, and *ton*, and *ford*, and *bury*, and *wick*, seem to be already monopolized and engaged ; but, if he were not my brother, I should venture to propose the very *proper* appellation of Baron Weathercock—Now don't, my dear Geraldine, put on an air of displeasure ; I would not be flippant about these relations of ours, (though the whole courtship that preceded this marriage has been to me a course of inexpressible torment) but when I reflect on their behaviour to you, I find it impossible to command myself—The cold, supercilious insolence of that antiquated piece of affectation, Mrs. Fairfax, with whom, there is no crime so great as being in inconvenient circumstances ; nor any recommendation so irresistible as riches and title—The pride and arrogance of her eldest daughter, now my sister-in-law, who, under an affected and over acted mildness of manners,

believes that the world was made only to do homage to her charms; and the yet more offensive conceit of Anastatia, whose whipt syllabubs of science she compels every one to taste and to admire, form together such a group, as it is quite impossible not to fly from if one could.—But I, alas! am chained to it—under pain of being “put into everlasting liberty”—for, I believe, were my mother to know how very much I dislike these people, she would, without much compunction, discard me, and put me to board somewhere or other on the interest of my fortune—and can I wonder at this after her behaviour to you?—You tell me, however, that I ought to bear whatever is inflicted by a parent's hand; and so, my dear Geraldine, I am learning as fast as I can, to check the natural impetuosity of my nature, and smitten on one cheek, to turn the other.—I will not indulge any of those satirical sallies that you have so often disapproved, but grow softly, sweetly sentimental, like the

the amiable Anastatia; and, when she is collecting round her all the men in the room (whether old or young, ugly or handsome, fools or wits) by the pretty languishing airs she gives herself, and totally neglecting every one else, with a rude indifference, as to their opinions, which is often extremely shocking; I will very humbly take my station behind her, and study those inimitable graces which render her so attractive.—She treats me like an insignificant child—and sometimes in the drawling quality tone, which she affects, speaking in the roof of her mouth as if she had lost her palate, she calls me poor, dear little Fanny!—Certainly I have not twenty thousand pounds as she has—nor have I a genius to write charades, songs and sonnets—nor to act plays, and read in public.—I hope, however, you don't think I say all this from envy, for I assure you, that with her humble three thousand pounds, and inferior advantages of every kind, poor, dear, little Fanny would not
change

change with the accomplished Anastatia.—I never seemed much worth her notice in any way, not even as an object of her contemptuous pity, till Mr. Bethel shewed me so much friendly attention, and was so much with me.—Mr. Bethel is, you know, related to the Fairfax family, and though it is well understood that he does not intend to marry again, and is, on account of his two children, a man whom Miss Anastatia would not accept of, yet could she not bear the preference he has always shewn me; and has sometimes been unable to repress her indignation at his want of taste.—Since he has been gone, she has perceived the dejection of my spirits, and whenever she has had an opportunity has affected to condole with me on the departure of my *sage lover*—and my *disappointment*.—It is in such conversation, if conversation it may be called, that I am to pass the tedious days of the next month, with the new married couple, and their relations and acquaintance.—Oh! Geraldine,

dine, why cannot I dedicate these days to you?

Mr. Bethel is gone back to his house in Kent; he told me some time before the cruel event of your being sent for to France, that his friend Desmond was, he believed, coming to Bath: but the most unaccountable circumstance of my mother's suspicions being excited about him, has, as I gather from Mr. Bethel's hints, entirely put an end to that project—and he is now gone, his friend knows not whither; but he says, most probably into the North of England (where he has many connexions) for the rest of the Summer.

I own I regret, though perhaps I ought rather to rejoice at, not seeing him here; but do not fancy, my dear sister, that this wish has any thing to do with that partiality for Desmond, which I was once simple enough to indulge, and partly to avow—No predilection of that sort can last long, after a conviction of its never being returned, and I must have the most perfect

perfect conviction of that, in regard to Mr. Desmond, whose heart is certainly devoted to another—though who that other is, it is better, perhaps, for neither of us to enquire.

The idle rumours that had been spread on that subject, are now dying away.—Other stories, equally gratifying to the curious malignity of the people, who call themselves the world, have succeeded; and except some sarcasms on the part of Mrs. Fairfax—some affected concern on that of Miss Anastatia, and some airs of consequential and mysterious apprehension from the new Mrs. Waverly, I have heard nothing about Desmond's Welch expedition, on which you will therefore, I hope, make yourself easy.

One of the stories that for some days engrossed the conversation of the Bath circles, till it was superceded yesterday by the splendid wedding of Mr. Waverly, was the sad calamity that has befallen poor Miss Elford; you know, I believe, that

six or eight weeks since, she departed from hence in order to make her usual Summer tour among her illustrious friends, for the last time before her marriage; and having staid a week with one friend, and a week with another, and ten days with a third, her lover, Dr. M'Dougal, was to have met her at the most northern of these visits, and with no other guard, "save her own purity"—she was to entrust herself to him to go into Scotland, where his family reside, and where she was to have become Mrs. M'Dougal.

As none of those friends, with whom she formerly corresponded, heard from her, they concluded that these arrangements were prosperously succeeding; and within these ten or fourteen days, they have been looking with impatience for an account of the celebration at Edinburgh of these happy nuptials—When suddenly a report prevails among the acquaintance of the Doctor, that on his arrival four or five weeks since, at the seat of his Father's,

from

from whence he was to have met his future bride at York, he received the very unexpected intelligence, that an uncle who had been many years in the West-Indies, where he had a wife and a son, and from whose riches no expectations were therefore formed, had buried both within the course of eighteen months, and at length followed them himself, leaving about forty thousand pounds between Dr. McDougal and his sister, a widow, not young, and without children—so that it was probable the Doctor would possess the whole.—In consequence of this accumulation of good fortune, report goes on to say, that Miss Elford has lost her admirer, who now feels it unnecessary to unite himself to a woman whom he does not love, in order to forward his interest in his profession—and that the deserted damsel, in the last despair at this disappointment, cannot bear to shew herself in a place which she left with such very different hopes, but

but has hid herself and her blasted expectations in some remote part of England.

It is at once amusing and mortifying, to remark the secret pleasure with which the *soi-disant* friends of poor Miss Elford relate this. — The day before Mr. Waverly's marriage, an assembly, chiefly consisting of the tabbies, who are the delight of my mother and Mrs. Fairfax, was held at the house of the latter; and while amid their cards, this fertile subject was introduced, I could not but smile at, while I regret, the fallacy of professed friendship, and the wonderful malignity of human nature. — The good fortune of Dr. M'Dougal, raised all their spleen. — Yet I could see that they secretly rejoiced, that their “worthy friend,” Miss Elford, was not to share it, while as if to revenge her cause, they loaded the poor Doctor with every abusive epithet which their fertile malice could suggest — and with the most fulsome affectation of pity towards the deserted Ariadne, they expressed a terrible abhorrence

rence of the cruelty of this modern The-
seus; who had, as one of them affirmed,
left her in a dreary part of Scotland, where
he had appointed to meet her; but where,
instead of himself, she was saluted by a
cold letter, taking leave of her for ever—
part of which letter this well informed
gentlewoman even repeated.

I observed, that during this conversa-
tion, my mother, who in such sort of con-
fabulations is seldom backward, was un-
usually reserved—she said it *might* be all
very true, for she had no intelligence from
dear Philadelphia to the contrary; but still
she was willing to *hope for the best*.—You
must agree with me, my dear sister, that
my mother is not very apt to keep to her-
self her knowledge on any topic, particu-
larly when she fancies, or knows, she
possesses, on the subject in discussion, more
information than those who are speaking
of it—Nevertheless, I am convinced, that
she on this knows a great deal more than
she chuses to tell; and has, for once,

some

some reason for silence, so strong as to conquer her desire of giving her knowledge to her admiring auditors.—How she should come by this information, indeed, I cannot guess; or why, if she corresponds with her dear Philadelphia, it should all of a sudden be kept so profound a secret—But conjectures on this head are useless, nor is it a matter that much deserves the trouble of investigation.—My mother, perhaps, having changed her bosom friend (for one, of what the common people call a crony, she must always have) has a mind to dismiss her quietly, and not by joining in any sarcasm against her, irritate her (especially in these very irritable moments) to disclose the purport of those long conferences which she and Miss Elford used to have together; during which, I believe, there was no transaction of her past life that she did not relate to this dear Philadelphia; nor any measures for her future conduct, in regard to her family, that she was not suffered to dictate.

—The

—The elderly ladies have a mortal aversion to great intimacy between two girls—and many have been the chidings and remonstrances I have endured, for walking and whispering and gigling with the young people of my own age, who have happened to be thrown in my way.—’Twas for no good, my mother used to say, that these violent intimacies subsisted—I wonder what good ever arises from the caballing of a dowager, and an old spinster.—I dare say, if these conferences could be fairly related, those of the Misses would be found the most innocent of the two; for theirs, I believe, generally turns upon the topic of gaiety, vanity and love—and those of the ladies of a certain age, upon hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness.

Ah! my dearest sister, while I am writing all this where are you? Your short incoherent letter* informed me, indeed, that you were safe as far as Rouen; but

* Which does not appear.

what has happened since?—I tremble at every sentence of French news; and the people among whom I live are such inveterate and decided enemies to the revolution, that they exaggerate with malicious delight, all the mischief they hear of, and represent the place whither you are going as a scene of anarchy, famine, and bloodshed.—I have heard stories that I am sure are improbable, and I hope impossible—and when my mother, the other day, was relating one of them “on the authority of a dear friend, of a dear friend of hers, a Lord somebody, just come through Paris in his way from Italy”—I could not help saying—“And you believe all this Madam?”—

“Believe it girl?—yes to be sure—I not only believe, but know it.”—

“And yet, Madam, it was at such a time, and consigned to such a man as your son-in-law, Verney, that you insisted upon sending your daughter, Geraldine, to Paris.”

I don't know that I ever recollect seeing my mother so angry, nor can I guess when her indignation for my impertinence would have subsided—if luckily for me, the upholsterer had not that moment entered with the patterns of some linens and chintz of which the new furniture at Bexley Hill is to consist.—Her daughter Geraldine, and her daughter Fanny, were in a moment equally forgotten; and she sent in a great hurry for her son to call a council with Miss Fairfax on this important point.—A very serious debate ensued, which, as Mr. Waverly was of the party, I knew would not very speedily end: and before they could settle the first question, whether the chintz furniture of the west bed chamber should be lined with sky blue, or grass green, I made my escape.

I direct this letter to the care of the banker at Paris, who Mr. Bethel assures me will know your abode there, and carefully convey it to you.—Oh! how anxiously I long to hear from you—how painfully

fully does my imagination dwell on the difficulties you may encounter, unprotected as you are; yet how decidedly convinced I am, that the greatest evil that can befall you would be meeting with your husband.

It is with a bleeding heart, my dear Geraldine, I say this; and, with a bleeding heart I await your letters, which heaven grant may bring me better accounts of you than my affrighted fancy suggests.

May heaven protect you, and all you love.

FANNY WAVERLY.

LETTER X.

TO MISS WAVERLY.

Meudon, August 16th, 1791.

ONCE more, my dearest sister, I have again a transient respite, after such a series of mental and bodily sufferings as I have not in my former letters*, very fully insisted upon, because it was enough for me to endure them, without tearing to pieces, by the description, the sensible heart of my Fanny.

I will now, however, when I can look back upon these situations and sensations with some degree of calmness, recapitulate briefly my little travels, the account of which must have been broken and disjointed, by the hurried and incoherent letters I wrote from Rouen and Paris.

* Which do not appear.

I need

I need not remind you of the state of languor in which I landed at Dieppe, after what was, they told me, a quick passage of seventeen hours.—I expected, the next morning, to have seen some symptoms, in the town, of the misery, which I was assured, the revolution had occasioned ; but every thing is the same as it was when we passed this way to England, six years since, except that, instead of processions of *les Carmes déchauffés, ou les Pères de l'Assomption*, we now see small parties of armed citizens parading the streets, at certain hours, as they go to their exercise, or to relieve the guard ; much better looking men, and much fitter to be entrusted with the care of their town than the miserable looking, half-starved soldiers, that I remember to have seen exercising on the walls when we were here before, who seemed likely, from actual want, to pillage, rather than protect the coast—These, on the contrary, are all men armed voluntarily to defend themselves, their families, and their property ;

perty; and, in a short time, when the advantages of freedom are felt, and the disadvantages of obtaining it by force forgotten, these associations will be as Smollett describes his countrymen, in one of the most beautiful odes that ever was written—

“With hearts resolv’d, and hands prepar’d,
The blessings they enjoy—to guard.”

That these blessings are not yet fully felt, seems to be the only complaint that the enemies to the freedom of France can alledge against it; as if, immediately after such a change, all could subside into order, and “every man sit down under his own vine and his own fig-tree.”

We know, from daily experience, that even in a private family, a change in its œconomy or its domestics, disturbs the tranquillity of its members for some time—It must surely then happen, to a much greater degree, in a great nation, whose government is suddenly dissolved by the resolution of the people; and which, in taking a new
form

form, has so many jarring interests to conciliate—A country too, where genuine patriotism having been always a prohibited sentiment, every man, whose property or talents give him weight, has been so long accustomed to consult his own interest, that the sacrifices to be made for general good appear too difficult to the individual, and he shrinks, from private inconvenience, which is certain and immediate, when remote, though general benefit is to be obtained by it.

We began our land journey the next day, save one, after our landing—Some little difficulties occurred about the number of post-horses that were to draw our carriage, on account of six persons being in it; though, of those six, three were infants in lap (these arrangements, which seem so strange and teizing to the English, are, I imagine, a remnant of former despotism, which gave the profits of the posts to government at its own discretion).

The country is very fine around Rouen Hills, resembling the high downs in Suffex, arise immediately around it, but the prospect from the summit of that to which the road led us, is infinitely more beautiful than any I ever saw—The Seine winding through a lovely vale of great extent, and the port of Rouen crouded with vessels—the town and suburbs—the old and magnificent cathedral—all embosomed in trees, with the finest meadows beyond them, and an infinite number of *châteaux* scattered through the whole landscape, render it altogether such a view as I never saw equaled in England; but, indeed, I have not, in my own country, been a great traveller.

On the summit of the hill, and just as the road led along a chalky hollow, which had been cut to ease the steepness of the acclivity, we were met by a procession of priests, chanting solemnly in Latin, and, as I apprehend, carrying the host to some
sick

sick person—They were preceded by a small party of the national guard, in their uniform, and under arms—The priests, one of whom carried a large crucifix of silver, gilt, were to the number of eighteen or twenty, all men in the flower of their age, and remarkably well-looking—I ordered the postillions to stop, and my servants to pull off their hats, while the procession passed, which had in it a solemnity particularly affecting; as the dirge they were singing in excellent voices, fell, or was resumed in awful responses echoing along the hollow cliffs of chalk—The mournful music was in unison with the melancholy temper of my mind, and I involuntarily shed tears, as I apostrophised the departing spirit, to whom these religious men were carrying the sacred wafer, which, in their opinion, secures its future happiness—“ Poor trembling being!’ said I, “ thou art, perhaps, about to quit, reluctantly, a world, to which

some tender connexion, some scenes of promised happiness attaches thee!—With reluctant and fearful heart, thou wilt receive what is to be, in thy opinion, a *passport* to the bosom of thy God!—while I, a wretched wanderer, in a wretched world, would most willingly exchange situations with thee; and with thy faith and thy prospects, lay down, even with pleasure, a life which, according to the course of nature, may be very long, according to all present probability, must be very miserable.”

These thoughts occurred as the figures slowly, and with down-cast eyes, passed close to my coach—The procession was finished by another small party of the national guard—“All religion, however,” said I, “is not abolished in France—they told me it was despised and trampled on; and I never enquired, as every body ought to do, when such assertions are made—Is all this true?”

As

As we proceeded, nothing could appear more beautiful than the extensive plains of Normandy, which, under all the disadvantages of bad cultivation, and the tumults existing these last two years, which are certainly inimical to the labour of the husbandman, do, literally, laugh and sing—This appearance of plenty would convince me of the truth of what Mr. Desmond once assured me, if I ever could doubt of facts which I hear from so accurate and candid a judge; I mean that the deficiency of bread, (*la disette du pain*) which, in eighty-nine and ninety, was so severely felt at Paris, was artificial, and created by those, who not only had the power to monopolize for their own profit, but others, who had it in view to reduce the people by famine to obedience—to turn their thoughts from the acquisition of freedom, to the preservation, on any terms, of existence.

It has been affirmed, and never contradicted, that the civil magistrates of Paris,

and the intendants of the provinces, had caused the corn to be cut down in the green blade—The effect of this atrocious wickedness, was, however, exactly the reverse of that which was intended—The transaction was discovered, and can we wonder it was repented?—The wretched projectors fell victims to the indignation of the people; and the cry of “du pain, du pain, pour nous & pour nos enfans,*” was loudly urged in the ears of royalty, when royalty was believed to have encouraged such atrocity.

While humanity drops her tears at the sad stories of those individuals who fell the victims of popular tumult so naturally excited, pity cannot throw over these transactions a veil thick enough to conceal the tremendous decree of justice, which, like “the hand writing upon the wall,” will be seen in colours of blood, and however regretted, must still be acknowledged as the hand of justice.

* Bread, bread, for us and our children.

This

This excursion into the field of politics, where, for the most part, only thistles can be gathered, and where we, you know, have always been taught that women should never advance a step, may, perhaps, excite your surprize—You will possibly wonder that, under the pressure of those evils which so lately surrounded me, I should, for a moment, find my spirits enough disengaged to enter into disquisitions so little attractive—The truth is, that whenever I am not suffering under any immediate alarm, my mind, possessing more elasticity than I once thought possible, recovers itself enough to look at the objects around me, and even to contemplate with some degree of composure, my own present circumstances, and the prospect before me, which would a few, a very few months since, have appeared quite insupportable.

It is to my sister, to my second self I write, and from her I do not fear such a remark as was made on some French woman of

fashion, (who I cannot now recollect) who, being separated from her husband, changed her religion to that (whatever it was) which he did not profess—"She has done it," said a wit, "that she might never meet her husband either in this world or the next"—Thus it might, perhaps, be said, that I determine never to think on any article (even on these, whereon my age and sex might exempt me from thinking at all) like Mr. Verney; and therefore, as he is, he knows not why a very furious aristocrat, that I, with no better reason, become democrat.

But I do assure you, my Fanny, that however ridiculous Mr. Verney's adherence may seem to the cause of persons of whom he knows nothing but their vices and their follies, my inconsequential opinion would not be put in the other scale, were I not convinced, that every principle, all that we owe to God, our fellow creatures and ourselves, is clearly on the other side the question.

This

This must be from conviction, for it cannot be from the prejudice of education—we were always brought up as if we were designed for wives to the Vicars of Bray—My father, indeed, would not condescend to suppose that our sentiments were worth forming or consulting; and with all my respect for his memory, I cannot help recollecting that he was a very Turk in principle, and hardly allowed women any pretensions to souls, or thought them worth more care than he bestowed on his horses, which were to look sleek, and do their paces well.

As to our mother, I am afraid our filial duty, highly as I venerate the principle, cannot conceal from us, that she suffered, in her department, no sentiments to be adopted which did not square with the substantial rules of domestic policy; for every single man of large fortune, though decrepid with age, or distorted by the hand of Nature, though half an idiot from his birth, or rendered worse than an idiot
by

by debauchery, we were taught to throw out encouragement ; and, I really believe, if the wandering Jew, or the yellow dwarf, or any other fabled being of hideous description, could have been sent on earth to have personified men of eight or ten thousand a year, we should have found it difficult to have escaped being married to them, if they had offered *good settlements*.

Riches and high birth—(the latter rather because it generally includes the former, than for its own sake) riches and high birth were ever the most certain recommendations to the favor of my mother—Merit unattended by these advantages, we were always taught to shun ; she knew that, unless we were blinded by early prejudice, it would force itself irresistibly on unadulterated minds ; and against such impressions she was constantly on her guard.

With what vigilance did she contrive, at Bexly Hill, to exclude from all our parties every young man who had nothing
else

else to recommend him, than his deserving to be noticed.—I remember, when a regiment of horse was quartered for some time at Wells, how eagerly she solicited the company of those of the officers, who were reputed to be men of fortune, while, if any subaltern, of inferior expectations, was introduced to her table, how cold, how reluctant were her civilities!—

That *I* have been most unhappily the victim of this mercenary spirit, I do not, however, mean to make matter of reproach to my mother—Happiness, in her estimation, consists in being visited by the opulent; in giving and receiving good dinners; in having at Bath, or in London, the reputation of having fashionable parties, and very full rooms; of curtsying, at church, to all the best dressed part of the congregation; and being looked upon as a very sensible woman, and one who knows the world; of being appealed to by the yellow admirals and gouty generals, as a person of great sagacity in cases, whether
of

of medicine, or cards, or anecdote; and of being considered as a perfect judge of etiquette; and a woman of the highest respectability.

Now, as these circumstances do, in her idea, constitute the *summum bonum*, can you wonder that she endeavoured to procure their certain possession for us?—That she has failed, at least, in regard to me, is not to be imputed to her as an error; her judgment was originally wrong; the fault of the head rather than the heart—She could not have succeeded, because, had Mr. Verney's self-indulgences left me all these blessings, on which my mother sets so high a value, I should, if I had been compelled to have entered into their routine, have been infinitely more miserable than I am now.

But to go on with the brief history of travels, which I have hitherto only related in a vague and disjointed way, I may as well take up the word miserable, with which I concluded the last sentence, and

tell you, that miserable, very miserable I was at Rouen; not, however, from finding the country—" *en feu & en sang*,"* as I had been assured I should do, by some emigrants with whom I conversed at Brighthelmstone; but from my own sad reflections, and the uncertainty of what was to be my destiny on my arrival at Paris.

Far from finding my approach to this city (Rouen) impeded by any of the popular confusion of which we have been told so much, I must give you a description of the scene.

It was about half past nine o'clock, when we entered the long double avenue of elms, which begins above a mile from the town.—The day had been very warm, and the evening was deliciously serene—The moon, nearly at the full, was reflected in long lines of radiance on the

* In blood and fire—or, as we say, under fire and sword.

silver bosom of the Seine, which is here much broader and clearer than at Paris; and the oars of boats, going up the river, were heard at intervals, as they dashed the sparkling water, mingled with the somewhat mournful, yet not unpleasing, sound of the sailors on the quay above, drawing up their anchors to depart.—As we advanced, the noise of the postillions, who delight in cracking their whips and hooting as they approach a town, interrupted, but could not drown the enlivening notes of the fifes, clarinets, and organs of the Savoyards, to which two or three parties were gaily dancing by the road side, while many others were walking under the trees, enjoying the beauty of the night.—The nearer we approached the town, the more numerous and well dressed were the groups we perceived, till near the former barrier, it might be justly called a croud who seemed to have no object but the pleasure of a gay walk by moon-light after a hot day—“ And this,” cried I, as I surveyed them,

them, "this is a specimen of universal national misery—of the fierce and sanguinary democracy so pathetically lamented by Mr. Burke!"

The next morning I received from the French merchant, to whom Mr. Bethel gave me letters, every attention which I could have claimed on a long acquaintance; he regulated every thing for our future journey in the way, least likely to occasion fatigue to me, and after resting at Rouen one day, we again went forward towards Paris.

Had my mind been less cruelly occupied by the certainty of present evils, or could I have looked forward with more calmness to the scenes that awaited me at Paris, I should have contemplated, with peculiar pleasure, the uncommon charms of the country that borders the Seine near Vernon—a town remarkably dirty and melancholy, situated in a spot of which imagination cannot conceive the beauty.

Around Rouen it is very fine; but, perhaps,

haps, as I had passed that country before, I was less struck with it now, and as I then travelled what is called the upper way to Paris, I did not go through Vernon.

The Seine, along whose banks the road lies for many miles, is here very broad and very rapid—broken by several beautiful little islands, where the willow dips its trembling leaves into the current, and mingled with the darker shade of alders, the poplar rises in luxuriant spires above.—On the opposite side of the river there are coppices edging the water, or green lines of meadow ground—hills resembling the Southern Downs of England arise beyond these—with here and there a scattered vineyard, the first I had seen in France—But a little beyond Vernon there are other hills of the most extraordinary forms I ever remarked—they appear, at the distance from which I surveyed them, like immense circular masses of stone or marble, piled on each other, or assembled in rows, as if some supernatural beings of extraordinary

dinary strength had thrown them there—
The singularity of their outline gives to
the whole landscape, for some miles, a
very romantic appearance, and the road
from which it is surveyed is equally wild
and picturesque—for it lies under a ridge
of high chalk rock, beneath which are a
few cottages, partly formed of the rock
itself, and half hid with vines.

You will wonder, perhaps, that in the
state of mind I was, as I passed through
this country, I should be able to give so
much attention to it as to make out even
this slight description—But I find, that
from a habit of suffering, the mind ac-
quires the power to suffer; and, if it resists
at all, becomes every year less acutely
sensible; it must at least be so with me,
for I now look forward with melancholy
composure to events that appear inevitable,
of which the bare idea a few years,
or even a few months ago, would have
driven me, I think, to frenzy.—I see no
end of my calamities but in the grave—
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You will wonder, perhaps, that in the state of mind I was, as I passed through this country, I should be able to give so much attention to it as to make out even this slight description—But I find, that from a habit of suffering, the mind acquires the power to suffer; and, if it resists at all, becomes every year less acutely sensible; it must at least be so with me, for I now look forward with melancholy composure to events that appear inevitable, of which the bare idea a few years, or even a few months ago, would have driven me, I think, to frenzy.—I see no end of my calamities but in the grave—
and

and having in a great measure ceased to hope, it were ridiculous to fear—Fate can have nothing worse in store for me than separation from those I love, embittered by poverty and contempt—Long lingering years, varied only by different shades of wretchedness, is all my prospect.

—Torn for ever from my dearest connections, and doomed to be the unresisting victim of a man, whose conduct is a continual disgrace to himself, his family, and his country.

“*Regretter par ceux qu’on aime, est un bien en comparaison de vivre avec ce qu’on hait*”—says de la Rochefaucault.—I do not hate Mr. Verney—God forbid I should; but yet I own his late conduct, in regard to Monsieur de Romagnecourt, and other circumstances that have accidentally come to my knowledge, have raised in me such a dread of him, that there is no humiliation to which I had not rather submit, than that of considering myself as his slave.

—Yet

—Yet to repeat the words of a pathetic French poem, I was reading yesterday,

“ Tel j'étois, tel je suis encore,
“ Ne respirant que pour souffrir.”

But I have strangely wandered from the narrative I undertook, to give more connectedly than you can gather it from my former letters.

I pass over the rest of my journey from Vernon to Mante, where we remained one night; and, in which, if there was any thing remarkable, I did not see it—for as I approached Paris my spirits sunk, and every league became more and more depressed—Yet what I felt was the calm desperation of incurable calamity, and not those sudden paroxysms of anxiety which are yielded to, when hope represents the possibility of redress; and the agitated mind, in the most acute moments of sorrow, looks round for succour.—I had nothing to hope—and what I then had to fear was of a nature so dreadful

and so peculiar, that I hardly dared trust my mind with its contemplation.

At length we arrived at Paris, and I saw myself in l'Hotel de Moscovie; for though Mr. Verney's letter had ordered me to take up my abode at the magnificent hotel of his illustrious friend, Monsieur le Duc de Romagnecourt, I had, in this instance, and by the advice of Mr. Bethel, determined to disobey him—I had written from Dieppe to Mr. Verney, to say I should await his orders at l'Hotel de Muscovie; but there were no letters there for me, or had any person been there enquiring after me.—As I was extremely fatigued, I determined, though it was yet only early in the evening, to do no more that night, than announce my arrival to the banker, to whom Mr. Bethel, and his friend, had given me letters; and deferring till the next day, every determination as to a future plan, to endeavour to procure some repose to my children and myself—In this I succeeded so far, as to see them all well the following morning, and to find
my

my own spirits rather more tranquil than I could expect, when, at nine o'clock, I received a note from Monsieur Bergasse, to whom my letters were addressed, saying that he would wait on me at ten.

I could not avoid explaining to him, though it was with extreme reluctance, the orders I had received from Mr. Verney.—I saw at once that he was startled at them, and believed that no husband who either regarded his wife or his honour, would have given such directions.—He informed me, however, that though the Duc de Romagnecourt had quitted Paris some time before the flight of the King, and that the splendid preparations making for his return from England, had been countermanded; yet it was likely that Mr. Verney, who might not have received my letter from Dieppe, had sent to the Duke's house his instructions how I should proceed—since the political changes that had happened after his first desiring me to meet him

in France, had probably changed his intentions in regard to me and to himself.

To the hotel de Romagnecourt, therefore, Mr. Bergasse was so good as to go for me; he very soon returned with a letter from Mr. Verney, directing me to remain there till his arrival, and informing me that he was going for a very short time to the neighbourhood of Avignon, with his dear friends Messieurs de Romagnecourt, de Bellizet and de Boisbelle; the former and latter of whom had just rejoined him—and that, in the mean time, I should find that every accommodation had been directed by the Duke to await me at Paris.

I could see by the whole turn of this letter, which was not, indeed, written with much art, that Mr. Verney had calculated that the money he remitted to me for my journey, could do no more than defray the expences of it; and that on my arrival at Paris, necessity must conquer the repugnance I might feel at being thus
made

made over, as an inhabitant of the house of Monsieur de Romagnecourt.

This gentleman also had taken the trouble to write to me; and, with many extravagant expressions of attachment and admiration, expressed his regret at my cruelty in not deigning to accompany him, and his delight at my charming condescension in coming at all—His *ardent* hopes that this, his letter, would find me in entire possession of his house at Paris, where he had given directions that his carriages and servants should be at my command; and of all of which he besought me to consider myself as sole mistress.

Oh! Fanny, what would have become of your unhappy sister, but for the kind interposition of Mr. Bethel.—Thus forced by my mother's inhumanity into a foreign country, without money or friends, where could I have found refuge for myself and my poor little ones, whose natural protector most unnaturally consigns their mo-

ther to a destiny more terrible than the most humble poverty.

Good God! is it possible that I am writing thus of the father of these children, for whose sake only I endure life?—I dare not trust my pen with another line on that subject—

“ Oh! that way madness lies; let me shun that,

“ No more of that”——*

The determination I at length came to was, to remain at the hotel de Moscovie, where I found very good accommodations, till I heard again from the unfortunate man whose property I am—but on no account to meet him, if I could avoid it, till he had relinquished every idea of compelling me, either with him or alone, to become an inmate in the house of Monsieur de Romagnecourt.—The manner in which I perceived Monsieur Bergasse heard the name of that nobleman

Shakespeare:

spoken

spoken of, confirmed, too certainly, all the fears I had of Mr. Verney's motive for cultivating an intimacy, from which most husbands would have recoiled—and, if contempt and abhorrence of his principles, could engender hatred against the father of George, of Harriet, and of William, surely I should be justified in feeling it.

Oh! how impossible it is to help relapsing continually into a topic so heavily pressing on the heart—Let me, however, close the detail of my wandering, till I settled here.—I remarked, in the little time I had to remark any thing, that I never saw so many people, of all ages, scarred and seamed with the small-pox, as I had observed since my being at Paris.—I was told that it was owing to the inveterate prejudices inculcated by the priests, who even now persisted in teaching, that to disarm this cruel disease of its malignity, was to offend heaven, which intended that it should blind, cripple, or

render spectacles of horror, those whose lives it spared—I enquired if it was now in Paris—I was answered that it was always in Paris.—Terrified at this intelligence, I sent to my friend Monsieur Bergasse, entreating him to look out for an house at some of the villages around it—He very obligingly undertook the enquiry, and on Friday informed me, that he had heard of a *maison bourgeois*,* but well furnished, and fit to be immediately inhabited, at Meudon.—I entreated him instantly to engage it—he did so; and, on my arrival, I found it infinitely more comfortable than I expected.—Here then I am, my Fanny, waiting in anxiety, but not with impatience, Mr. Verney's further orders—

* Houses in France were, till now, distinguished by “*maisons bourgeois*,” fit only for citizens or inferior people—and *maisons noble*, belonging to men of rank, or to *les terres titrés*,

With

With sensations very different *your* letters are expected by your affectionate

GERALDINE.

Have you heard from Mr. Desmond?—

I thought he would before now have written to me.

Mr. Bethel, I hope, is still at Bath.—

I conclude I might by this time send my compliments to our newly acquired sister; but probably she will readily dispense with that ceremony.—Do you recollect in the novel of Sidney Biddulph (one of the best that we have in our language) how poor Sidney is treated in her adversity by the haughty wife of her brother, Sir George? Perhaps there is a little similarity in our destinies—But *I have no Faulkland!*

LETTER XI.

TO MISS WAVERLY.

Meudon, Sept. 7, 1791.

YOU ask me, my sister, for a further description of my abode, if that can be called an abode where I am only a transient lodger, and from whence I every moment expect to receive a summons to depart—for—Alas! I know not whither!

You ask, too, my motives for preferring this place, which in my last letter I told you was melancholy, to Versailles or St. Cloud, where I could equally have the advantage of gardens—or to Chaillot, Passy, or some other pleasant village, more immediately adjoining to Paris.—My dear Fanny, I prefer this place, *because it is melancholy, and because it is retired.*

Here, as I wander over the deserted gardens, I seldom meet any body but the men, who keep them in something like order,

order, and who do not even look back at me, or mark my solitary walks.

There are, at Meudon, two palaces, one of very ancient structure and long, quite uninhabited—The other built, or at least repaired, by the Dauphin, father of the present King, which Louis the XVIth has occasionally inhabited, and which contains many handsome apartments—They both stand in the same garden, which has never received any modern improvements—and in many parts of it the borders are destitute of their former ornaments; and, of many of the trees and shrubs that remain,

“The boughs are moss’d with age,

And high tops bald with dry antiquity.”*

Adjoining to the most ancient of these royal houses, which terminates a long avenue and a large court, is a chapel with an arched gateway, leading to it from the garden, and surrounded by paved passages and high cloisters—and it is on some

* Shakespeare.

H 5

broken

broken steps, that near these almost ruinous buildings, lead from the lower to the upper garden, I frequently take my pensive seat, and mark the sun sinking away above the high coppices that are beyond the gardens; (and I imagine form a part of them, though I have not yet ventured to wander so far.)—A yet more cheerful seat I have found for my less melancholy moods, on the wall of the terrace on the opposite side, which looks down immediately on the village of Meudon—where, among its pleasant looking houses, they still point out the habitation of the celebrated *Rabelais*.—As I never enjoyed, because, perhaps, I do not understand his works, I contemplate it not with so much pleasure as it would afford those who can admire them.—Of late, my Fanny, I have found this view too *riante*, and have adhered almost every evening after I have put my little ones to bed, to the old steps—where I hear no sounds but the bell of the convent of Capuchins (which is on a high ridge of land, concealed by trees,

about half a mile from the old palace) or the wind murmuring hollow through the iron gratings and stone passages that lead round the chapel, from whose windows of painted glass I can fancy the sullen genius of superstition peeps forth, sighing over his departed power, in melancholy responses to the summons, that call the monks to their evening devotions.

I often meet, as I come through the avenue, some of these venerable fathers, who, with slow steps, and downcast eyes, their cowl frequently covering their faces, and their arms crossed upon their breasts, pass me—apparently so occupied by their holy meditations, as not to hold an insignificant being like me, worth even a salutation.

But why should that seem discourteous, which is probably a part of their religion? I ought also to consider, that besides the gloomy austerity of their order, they are now, perhaps, more austere, because they are unhappy—They believe their altars are violated, and their pro-

session rendered odious—They fear their subsistence may fail them, and that they may be turned out into a world which is seldom too kind to the unfortunate, and is likely to treat *their* misfortunes with ridicule instead of pity.—I have observed, within this last week, one among them who seems more restlessly wretched than the rest—I remark him every day pass by the windows of the house where I live, with a basket in one hand, and a staff in the other—his hood always concealing his face, and his tall figure bending as if weighed down by calamity.

After the morning duties are over, I see him glide among the trees in the garden, or among the vines that cloathe the declivity towards the village; more than once he has come forth of an evening from the cloistered passages of the chapel, and, with solemn step, crossed near me to attend the last offices of the evening, when he hears the bell from the convent

convent echo among the winding colonades.

There is something particularly affecting to me, in beholding this solitary mourner—whose griefs, though they are probably of a different kind from mine, are possibly as poignant.—Perhaps he was once a gay and thoughtless inhabitant of the world—He may have seen (for he does not appear to be a young man) these now deserted palaces, blazing in the splendour of a voluptuous court—Among its vanished glories, he may have lost all he loved; and he has now, it may be, no other consolation than visiting in the *cimetière* of the chapel, the stone on which time is destroying even the sepulchral memorial of this beloved object.

As I thus make out, in my imagination, his melancholy story, I shed tears; I shudder at the distress I have drawn—Oh! Fanny!—among all the miseries of humanity, the most insupportable is surely the death of those we love; and yet how full
of

of contradiction is the human heart—I know there are many, many evils in life to which death is infinitely preferable—I know that I myself prefer it to the continuance of such an existence as has long been mine; yet, to out-live *you*, my *children*, and *one or two of my friends*, presents an idea of calamity which would deprive me of my reason.

How have I been led by the poor desponding Monk into this digression?—I hardly know, and have not now much time to revise what I have written, as a messenger goes to Paris this evening, who is to take my letter; I return, therefore, to my subject as abruptly as I quitted it, to tell you the little that remains to be said about my house—It is just like other French houses; and its only recommendation to me is the melancholy sort of repose, and the solitary walks, which its immediate neighbourhood to the gardens of Meudon afford me.

The

The windows command great part of the view between this place and Paris, to which, it would be difficult for the pencil to do justice—with a pen, it were hopeless to attempt it.

The first yellow tints of Autumn are hardly stealing on the trees, encreasing, however, where they have touched them, the beauty of the foliage—The sky is delightfully serene; and a sun-set in the gardens here exceeds what I ever saw in England for warmth and brilliancy of colouring—No dew falls, even when the sun is gone, though we may call the evenings now autumnal evenings—I am generally out with my children till past seven o'clock, and after I have attended them to their beds, I still find it mild and warm enough to allow me to perform *my* vespers in the open air.

You, my Fanny—at least, till your tenderness for me taught it to you—you have never been unhappy, and have never known

known (O! *may* you never know) the strange and, perhaps, capricious feelings of the *irretrievably* wretched—Since I have found myself so, I have taken up a notion that I do not breathe freely, while I am within the house; and like the poor maniac, who wandered about in the neighbourhood of Bristol, I fancy “that nothing is good but liberty and fresh air.”

In consequence of this sensation, I live all-day about the gardens; while the sun is high, Peggy attends me with the three children, in some shady part of them; and George often amuses himself with catching the little brown lizards which abound in the grass, and among the tufts of low shrubs on this dry soil—He brings them to me—I bid him take great care not to hurt them—I explain to him, that they have the same sense of pain as he has, and suffer equally under pressure and confinement—He looks very grave, as I endeavour to impress this on his mind; and then gently putting them down, cries, “no!
no!

no! indeed! I will not hurt you, poor little things!"

How much a tone, a look, an almost imperceptible expression of countenance will awaken to new anguish an heart always oppressed like mine!—As, liberating his prisoners, he says this—I look round on him, his sweet sister, and his baby-brother, and internally sighing, say, "Oh! would I were sure, if ever your poor mamma is torn from you, that nobody will hurt *you*, poor little things!"

What ails me, to be thus unusually weak, this evening?—I believe the heat of the day has overcome me—I will go and walk, as I did last night, when I have finished my letter.

I shall probably meet my fellow sufferer, for such I am sure he is, the solitary Capuchin—I have just seen him walk towards the palace garden.—Well!—and is there not satisfaction in beholding a being, who, whatever may have been his misfortunes, seems to have found consolation and fortitude

tude

tude in religion—I have often entertained an half-formed wish that he would speak to me—Perhaps his own sufferings may have taught him that tender sympathy with the sufferings of others, which is often so soothing to the sick heart, and he might speak of peace to me!

I am sadly distressed here for want of books; the few which, with such a quantity of necessary baggage, I was able to bring with me, I have now exhausted; and though my good friend, Monsieur Bergasse, has sent me some from Paris, they happen to be such as I cannot read with any pleasure—I have supposed it not impossible that the Monk might supply me from the library of his convent.

This deficiency of books has compelled me to have recourse to my pen and my pencil, to beguile those hours, when my soul, sickening at the past, and recoiling from the future, would very fain lose its own mournful images in the witchery of fiction, or in some pursuit; though, alas!

it

it is too true, that the mind will stray from the fingers; and that I cannot find, either in work or in drawing, enough employment to keep me from sad and bitter reflection.

Reason as vainly tells me, that nothing can be worth the unceasing solicitude I feel—Were it only for myself, I surely should not indulge it; nor would I magnify or dwell upon the actual and possible miseries of my destiny, but for my children!—for those I love so much better than myself!—I cannot help being sensible of such agonizing anxiety as occupation cannot charm, nor reason conquer.

I have found, however, a melancholy delight in describing these sufferings—I usually take my evening seat on the flight of steps I have described to you—Sometimes, when I am in more tranquil spirits, I sketch, in my port-folio, the wild flowers and weeds that grow among the buildings where I sit—In some parts, ivy holds together the broken piles of brick, from whence

whence the cement has fallen—The stone-crop, and the toad-flax, cover or creep among the masses of disjointed marble, several sorts of antirrhinum still wave their pink and purple blossoms along the edges of the wall; and last night I observed, mingled with them, a root of the field poppy, still in flower—On the qualities of this plant I fell into a reverie.—To you, my Fanny, and to you only, I entrust the little wild ode—almost, indeed, an impromptu, which this contemplation produced.

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ODE TO THE POPPY.

Not for the promise of the labor'd field,
Not for the good the yellow harvests yield,

I bend at Ceres' shrine;
For dull, to humid eyes appear,
The golden glories of the year;
Alas!—a melancholy worship's mine!

I hail the Goddess for her scarlet flower!

Thou brilliant weed,
That dost so far exceed,
The richest gifts gay Flora can bestow;
Heedless I pass'd thee, in life's morning hour,
(Thou comforter of woe,) 'Till sorrow taught me to confess thy power.

In early days, when Fancy cheats,
A various wreath I wove;
Of laughing springs luxuriant sweets,
To deck ungrateful love:
The rose, or thorn, my numbers crown'd,
As Venus smil'd, or Venus frown'd;
But Love, and Joy, and all their train, are flown;
E'en languid Hope no more is mine,
And I will sing of thee alone;
Unless, perchance, the attributes of grief,
The cypress bud, and willow leaf,
Their pale, funereal foliage, blend with thine.

Hail,

Hail, lovely blossom!—thou can'st ease,
 The wretched victims of disease;
 Can'st close those weary eyes, in gentle sleep,
 Which never open but to weep;
 For, oh! thy potent charm,
 Can agonizing pain disarm;
 Expel imperious memory from her seat,
 And bid the throbbing heart forget to beat.
 Soul-soothing plant!—that can such blessings give,
 By thee the mourner bears to live!
 By thee the hopeless die!
 Oh! ever “friendly to despair,”
 Might sorrow's palid votary dare,
 Without a crime, that remedy implore,
 Which bids the spirit from its bondage fly,
 I'd court thy palliative aid no more;
 No more I'd sue, that thou shouldst spread,
 Thy spell around my aching head,
 But would conjure thee to impart,
 Thy balsam for a broken heart;
 And by thy soft Lethean power,
 (Inestimable flower)
 Burst these terrestrial bonds, and other regions try.

GERALDINE VERNEY.

LET.

LETTER XII.

TO MR. BETHEL.

I HAVE been long in writing to you, Bethel, and now hardly know whence to date my letters, as I am, and have been, and shall be, upon the ramble for some time—I am unhappy, and the unhappy are always restless.

What a challenge on political affairs does your last letter contain!—In the present state of my spirits I cannot contend with you, were I disposed to do it; but I am willing to allow, that much of your eulogium on the constitution of England is just; and that it is so good, that it ought to be better.

If we see an individual who has a thousand good qualities that excite our esteem and admiration, and yet know he has two or three failings that render all his virtues of little avail, we very naturally say, what
pity

pity that this man, who is so brave, so sensible, so humane, should, by a strange inconsistency of character, be so corrupt, so easily led away by objects unworthy of him—so warped by prejudice, so blind to his own interest—And thus it is with all the affairs of life, perhaps; that any degree of perfection makes us regret that the object in which it exists is not perfect.

Of this nature is the regret I feel in regard to my country—I would have our boast of her excellence just—I would not have it the mere cant which we have learned by rote, and repeat by habit; though, when we venture to think about it, we know that it is vanity and prejudice, and not truth, when we speak of its wonderful perfection; and that even those who are its most decided partizans, are continually betrayed into an acknowledgement of its defects.—Boswell, in his life of Johnson says, that “in the British parliament, any question, however unreasonable or unjust, may be carried by a venal majority.”—This is acknowledged truth;

and it follows, that while the means of corruption exist to an extent so immense, there must be a venal majority; and, of course, every question, however ruinous, will be carried.—While this is the case, and while every attempt to remedy this *original sin* of the constitution is opposed (though the necessity of that remedy has been allowed by the greatest statesmen of our country) while every proposal to make it *really* what it is only *nominally*, raises a cry as if the subversion of the whole empire was intended — I cannot agree to unlimited praise—though most certainly willing to allow to you, that a greater portion of happiness is diffused among the subjects of the British government, than among any other people upon earth; but this rather proves that their condition is very wretched, than that ours is perfectly happy.—Carried on a little in the same way, was the argument that I heard not long since, *against* the abolition of the detestable Slave Trade —I was pleading *for it* with a member of parliament, who has an estate in the West-

Indies, and who has been there himself, some years ago, when he commanded a man of war—I talked warmly (for I had just been reading the reports of the committee) and I talked from my heart.—My adversary, well hackneyed in the ways of men, treated all I could say as the ill-digested speculation of a hot-head enthusiast, who knew nothing of the matter.—“You are young, Mr. Desmond,” said he, “very young, and have but little considered the importance of this trade to the prosperity of the British nation; besides, give me leave to tell you, that you know nothing of the condition of the negroes neither, nor of their nature—They are not fit to be treated otherwise than as slaves, for they have not the same senses and feeling as we have—A negro fellow minds a flogging so little, that he will go to a dance at night, or at least the next day, after a hearty application of the cat—They have no understanding to qualify them for any rank in society above slaves; and, indeed, are not to be called men—they are monkeys.”

kies."—Monkies! Sir!" exclaimed I, "that is, indeed, a most extraordinary assertion.—Monkies! I believe, indeed, they are a very distinct race from the European—So also is the straight-haired and fine formed Asiatic—So are the red men of North America—But where, amid this variety, does the man end, and the monkey begin? I am afraid if we follow whither this enquiry will lead us, that we shall find ourselves more degraded than even by the whimsical system of Lord Monboddo.—If the negro, however, is a monkey, let me hazard one remark—that their very near affinity to us, is too clearly ascertained by the alliances we have formed with them; nay, I have even heard that captains of our ships of war, have often professed that they prefer the sable nymphs of Africa to the fairer dames of Europe—

"The pale unripen'd beauties of the North."

"And, if I recollect aright, Sir, I have formerly, in moments of unguarded conviviality, heard you say, that when you were a young man, and in the sea service,
you

you had yourself indulged this partiality for these monkey ladies."

This parried, a little, the round assertion that negroes were not men; but he still insisted upon it that they had little or no feeling; it was not, however, very difficult to prove, as far as proof can on such a point be brought, that their physical and moral sensibility is more acute than ours.—I will not lengthen my letter by repeating these proofs, because I am persuaded you are not disposed to dispute them; but go on to say, that after I had carried almost every article against him, my adversary was compelled to take shelter under such an argument as yours.—"Perhaps," said he, "the negroes *are* sometimes beat, but not half so much as our soldiers are—The punishment inflicted on soldiers is infinitely more severe."—"Does not that, Sir," said I, "rather prove that our military punishments are inhuman, than that the negroes have nothing to complain of?"

Thus,

Thus, my dear Bethel, it seems to me, that instead of proving that we are extremely happy, you prove only that we are comparatively so; and, for my part, I never could, as many people do, derive consolation from the reflection that the existence of evil in the person of another, diminished the sense of what I felt in my own.

Do not, however, misunderstand me; I think that our form of government is certainly the best—not that can be imagined—but that has ever been experienced; and, while we are sure that practice is in its favour, it would be most absurd to dream of destroying it on theory.—If I had a very good house that had some inconveniencies about it, I should not desire to pull it down, but I certainly should send for an architect and say, alter this room—it is too dark—remove those passages—they are too intricate—make a door here, and a staircase there; make the kitchen more habitable for my servants, and then my house will be extremely good—But I should be very much startled if my architect was to say,

say, " Sir, I dare not touch your house— if I let in more light, if I take down those partitions, and make the other changes you desire, I am very much afraid that the great timbers will give way, and the *party-walls* crush you beneath their ruins."

As I do not know when I shall see you, I shall continue to write—and wish very much to hear from you often.—If you send your letters to Messrs. Sibthorpe and Griffith, bankers in London, on whom I draw for money as I want it, they will always be able, during the rest of my ramble, to trace my route by my drafts and letters on business.

Adieu ! dear Bethel,

Ever your's faithfully,

LIONEL DESMOND.

LET.

LETTER XIII.

TO MR. DESMOND.

Hartfield, Sept. 10, 1791.

I STIFLE, I repress all curiosity, Desmond—I have often told you I never desired to interfere with your affairs, farther than you wished me to do so—farther than you thought I could be useful to you: and therefore, though I read, with wonder and concern, a letter not dated, either as to place or time—A letter, in which the name of Geraldine is not mentioned; and in which you seem not to know either where you are or where you shall be—I will not say more upon it, than that I am always glad to hear of you, upon your own terms.

When will the time come to which I have so long and so vainly been looking forward?—When shall I see you living in
Sedge-

Sedgewood, in that most respectable of all characters, the independent English gentleman?—I never wanted your society so much as I do now; but, perhaps, never was so unlikely to have it; and all that I find here, is so little to my taste, that I shall be glad to return to Bath, which it is judged necessary for me soon to do.

This dislike of society, however, arises not from its quantity, but its quality—Since Sir Robert Stamford has settled in the neighbourhood, his house, which is almost always full, supplies the market-town with idle or curious morning visitors; and at the coffee-house, where I very seldom go, I happened, on calling yesterday, to meet your Uncle Major Danby, and I learned that, attracted by the reputation of Epicurean living, he had accepted the invitation often given by his old acquaintance Sir Robert, and was on a fortnight's visit at Linwell.

I found the Major had collected round him the Curate, the Attorney, the Attor-

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ney's Clerk, the Riding Surveyor, the Master of an Academy, "where youth are *genteely* educated," and two or three of the principal tradesmen of the town; and that, from a very long oration on politics, which they had heard with conviction and admiration, he had glided away on a descriptive tour to his own seat near Bath; and was giving a *catalogue raisonnée* of its conveniences, obliquely preferring them all to the accumulations of the same luxuries at Linwell.

"I own," said he, "Sir Robert has been at a great expence, an immense expence—but the thing, my dear Sir, (addressing himself to the Attorney) the thing is judgment—judgment in laying out money is every thing."

"Aye, Sir, to be sure," answered this gentleman, (who was, I found, an enemy of Sir Robert's, because he was employed in election matters by a great man of the opposite party)—"aye, certainly; and, as you say, how should Sir Robert Stamford

have this judgment?—seeing, that it was but a very few years ago that he knew more of a *fi, fa* and *latitats*, *John Doe* and *Richard Roe*, than about raising foreign fruits and ice creams—I don't wish to speak in disparagement of the profession neither—for an honest attorney is a very honorable thing.”

“And, I am sure, it is a very rare one, interrupted a blunt tradesman, in a smooth black wig, and leather breeches—a very rare one—and, for aught I ever saw or heard to the contrary, you may put all the honest lawyers that ever was in your eye, and never see the worse.”

“That's not so civil a speech, Sir,” said Mr. Grimbald, the Exciseman; “Sir Robert Stamford, Sir, my worthy patron, is a man of honor, Sir, and a gentleman, Sir; and as for his having practis'd the law, Sir, and thereby raised himself to his present rank, it does him credit, Sir, and shews that this government and administration fairly and justly rewards merit, Sir.”

“Come,

"Come, come, Mr. Grimbold," cried the Attorney, "we know very well that the greatest merit Sir Robert has in your eyes, is his having rewarded *your* merit, and made you a riding-officer; because of the votes for this here borough of ours, that are in your family, Mr. Grimbold—"

"Yes! yes!" said Mr. Doughty, another tradesman, we understand trap, and so does our good neighbour—As to me, I am free to speak without favor or affection—We all know what Sir Robert Stamford was—What then!—which of us that had been as much in luck would not have done the same thing?—I have nothing to say to that—Whatever a man can make in the way of business, whether it be as to lawyer, or a tradesman, or a place at court, is all fair enough; and I, for my part, don't want to cry Sir Robert down, though he does not deal at my shop; he went to Gill's when he settled here—for why? 'Twas natural enough, Gill could command three votes—certain I have but one; but Sir

Robert, though he is not a constant customer, lays out a good deal of money with me, and I've no fault to find."

While this conversation, so expressive of the candor and disinterested conduct of British electors, went on, I stood *perdu* behind Mr. Grimbald; a tall personage, whose broad shoulders, however, just permitted me to peep over at the Major, who had not yet espied me—I saw he became extremely restless at being compelled to hear so much of the consequence of this friend Sir Robert, when he was thinking only how he might best display his own—Not very curious in his auditors, he is well contented to be heard; and detests a man who interrupts him worse than a pick-pocket.

He now raised his voice in the vain hope of being still attended to—The worthy Burgesses of W—— had got upon a topic much more interesting to them, than a description of pastures, the beef of which they should never partake, and of pineries,

the produce of which, not even an election could send them a share; and he therefore bustled up to quit the circle, when perceiving me, he advanced, and very cordially shook hands with me—We walked away together, and fell into conversation on the views, and the soil, and the husbandry in this part of the country; which, he said, was very much inferior to that tract of the county of Somerset, round his house at Ashford-hall.

This uncle of yours has, to a very extravagant degree, a trait of character which I have, in my way through life, once or twice remarked before—Whatever he does, is better done than any other man living could have done it—whatever he says is without appeal—whatever he possesses is more extraordinary, more excellent, than are the same things in the possession of his neighbours.

His house and gardens are the best in the county—his men do more work—his crops are more luxuriant—and so fond is

he of being always the most active and the most important, that I have heard him boast of having, in his judicial capacity for the county of Somerset, committed, in the course of one year, more prisoners to the county jail, than any three of his brethren of the bench.

You know, that being an old batchelor, and somewhat of an epicure, he is at home, what the vulgar call a cot; and has laid down his spontoon for the tasting spoon, converted his sword into a carving knife, and his sash into a jelly bag—It is not her youth or her beauty, that recommended his present favorite housekeeper; but the skill she had acquired in studying under a French cook, at the house of a great man, who acquired an immense fortune in the American war, by obtaining the contract for potatoes and four crout—But even to this gentlewoman, skilled as she is in “all kinds of made dishes, pickling, potting, and preserving,” and tenderly connected with her, as the prying world supposes the

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Major to be; he does not leave the sole direction of that important department, his kitchen; which, when he is at home, he always superintends himself.—“Aye, aye,” said he, in this last conversation, “let those alone for good eating who know what it is to have lived badly.—I remember when we were in camp in Germany, and had nothing to drink but water from a pond that swarmed with vermin, and not enough of that—and nothing to eat but such bread as I would not now give to my hogs—while the money went into the pockets of the contractors.”

“You now live in happier times, Major,” said I.

“Aye, that we do, indeed—these times are very good times, if the damned scoundrels of presbyterians and non-conformists would but let us be quiet that think them good; and not be disturbing the public tranquillity, and be cursed to the round-headed sons of b——s.”—Then looking more important, he added, “To tell you

very seriously my thoughts, Mr. Bethel, I don't much like the present appearance of affairs—there is a very troublesome mutinous spirit got among the dissenters—These riots that happened in July at Birmingham”—

“Nay, dear Major Danby,” cried I, “it was not the dissenters who rioted there”—

“No; but it was owing to them and their seditious meetings—For my part, I rejoice that they fell into the pit they had dug for others—I wish that they had all been blown up together, and the country well rid of them.—I'll tell you what, Bethel, if I had commanded on that occasion, I should have been apt, I believe, to have protected those honest men in what they did against your confounded saints.—Those canting puritans are all water drinkers, fellows that sing and pray—I'd extirpate the whole race.”

“You would really?”

“Yes,

“ Yes, by G—— would I, before they do any more mischief—What business have *they* to mutter, and raise disturbances, and complain of their grievances? I hope government will never grant them an acc—— let them grumble on, but not influence the opinion of other people.—At present I am a little uneasy at the face of affairs—I have a stake in the hedge, Mr. Bethel; a pretty considerable stake, and I don’t desire to see it trampled down.”

“ I don’t know,” replied I, “any body that does.”

“ Yes, yes, but I do know such—You are, indeed, a temperate man—a man who has seen a good deal of the world—You have a stake also of some consequence; so, indeed, and a very valuable one, has my nephew, Desmond—But what d’ye think now of him?—He’s as discontented as any Praise-God-bare-Bones of them all—I can’t imagine what possesses the puppy—he’s not like any other young fellow of his age; instead of sporting his money like a
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man of spirit, on the turf, or with the bones, he goes piping about, and talks of unequal representation, and the weight of taxes, and the devil knows what; things, with which a young fellow of six-and-twenty has no concern at all—And then, as for his amours; instead of keeping a brace or two of pretty wenches, he goes sneaking after a married woman—to be sued for damages, and, perhaps, run through the body.”

“Sneaking about after a married woman, Sir,” said I, “pray explain.”

“Come, come, Bethel,” replied your sage uncle, “don’t affect ignorance—I believe you are a trusty confidant, but here your secrecy is a mere joke—the thing is too notorious.”

“I must beg an explanation, Major Danby,” cried I, with some warmth—“since you think me concerned, it is the more necessary.”—“Why, if I must explain then, can you really now suppose that we

don't all know the history of Mrs. Verney?"—"The history of Mrs. Verney, Sir!—Upon my honour I must recommend it to you to speak more cautiously of a woman of whom malice itself cannot injure the reputation—A woman who is an example of a blameless wife, to a very worthless husband—and the best mother, daughter, and sister——"

"Why damn it now, Bethel, how can you fancy all this will do with me? If Mrs. Verney has a *penchant* for Lionel, with all my soul.—I know very well that if the stupid puppy, her husband, had as many horns as the beast in the Revelations, he deserves them all, and Desmond has as good a chance as another, with any woman; but I think he's a fool to be at such a cursed expence about it, and then to fancy himself so snug, like a woodcock that hides its head, and believes itself secure,—Hah! ha! hah!"

"Upon my word, Major, I must still declare myself ignorant of your meaning."

He absolutely shouted, in his coarse boisterous way, but seeing me look very grave, he at length checked his mirth, and said—"Why lookee, Bethel, when a young fellow lays down between three and four thousand pounds, to release from execution the effects of a man he despises and contemns; when he goes down *incog.* to the retirement of such a man's wife, and stays near a month in her neighbourhood; when he is known to have declined the most advantageous offers of alliance from the families of some of the finest young women in England on her account; and, when he is actually, at this time, gone abroad with her; or, however, concealed somewhere or other, how (the plague can you suppose the world will *not* talk?) It is well enough known, that Verney is a savage and a scoundrel, who will sell his wife to the best bidder—Why don't Lionel offer him her price at once, for now you may depend upon it he'll be sued, and Verney will get devilish damages."—I was, as you will easily believe,

lieve,

lieve, thunderstruck by a speech in which truth was so blended with falsehood, that while I was compelled to allow some part of it to be true, it seemed hopeless, with such a man, to contend, that much of it was an infamous supposition.—How make your uncle Danby believe, that you should, on a system of affection, *merely platonic*, have advanced this money? (of which it is wonderful that he should be informed) *on a system merely platonic*, go and live *perdu* in Herefordshire? *On a system merely platonic*, be now concealed in France, in the neighbourhood of Geraldine—for such I am afraid is the fact.—Dear Desmond! behold the consequences of your indiscretion!—See what cruel (and, as I am convinced) what *unjust* reflections you have been the means of throwing on the woman you love—consider all the consequences that may follow.—However hopeless the undertaking appeared, I endeavoured to convince Major Danby, that in whatever way you might have interfered

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to be serviceable to Mrs. Verney, for whom you had a very great friendship; yet that all this originated, on your part, not from any designs prejudicial to the honour of Mrs. Verney, but from your pity for an amiable woman involved in undeserved calamities; that you certainly were not in France now, but in the North of England; and that Mrs. Verney was with her husband."

All the answer I could obtain to this was, "Pooh! pooh!—Pshaw! pshaw! we know better."—I could neither convince the Major of the fallacy of the reports he had heard, or prevail upon him to name the authors.—Tired with the conversation, and heartily vexed, I left him soon after; nor could the account he was again going to begin of his own importance, which is an idea ever uppermost in his mind, prevail upon me longer to attend to him.—I returned home, and he went back to Sir Robert Stamford's, there to entertain the respectable society (among whom

whom I find is Lord Newminster and Sir James Deybourne) with an account of *my* consternation at the knowledge he has of your affairs.

I own to you, Desmond, that this dialogue has occasioned to me very cruel disquiet.—If this letter reaches you before the mischief is irreparable, by the universal dissemination of these reports, so injurious to the peace, perhaps so fatal to the life of Geraldine; appear, I conjure you, shew yourself in England—convince her friends and the world that you have *not* followed her to France; and vindicate, at once, her fame and the veracity of

Your faithful servant,

E. BETHEL

LET.

LETTER XIV.

T O M R. B E T H E L.

Bexley Hill, near Wells, Somerset,
Sept. 23, 1791.

Y O U lately accustomed me, dear Sir, to confide to you the cruel uneasiness that preyed upon my heart, in regard to my sister Verney; and surely you will forgive me, if I once more intrude upon you—when I am, on her account, infinitely more unhappy than ever, and when I have no friend but you to whom I dare speak of her.

It is now two days since I have been in possession of a sixth letter from her, since she has been in France; it is dated, as the two preceding letters were, from Meudon; it gives me an account of her situation; it describes the scene around her; they are her words—her sentiments—her ideas—and she has

has even added a beautiful little ode, which as I read it, gave me such a picture of her despondent state of mind, as drew tears from my eyes.

As there were, however, some parts of this letter which I could not, with propriety, shew my mother, as the sentiments might have raised her anger, and the poetry her aversion, I said nothing to her of my having received such a letter.—She, herself, had long ceased to enquire, earnestly, about my sister; and therefore, in this concealment, or rather silence, I had not to reproach myself with breach of duty and tenderness, in trifling with maternal solicitude.

I believed my mother was quite easy about Geraldine, and content not to be at any expence herself, was perfectly satisfied with whatever dispositions Mr. Verney might chuse to make about his wife and his children.

You will suppose then, that I was extremely surpris'd yesterday.—I was at work
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in my own room, when my mother, about a quarter of an hour after the arrival of the letters from the post, entered it; I saw immediately that something had discomposed her; but as trifles very often affect her more than things of consequence, I concluded that her maid had made up her Mecklin lace awkwardly, or had put too much starch in her new Japan muslin; and, that having vented as much of her anger on the poor girl as it was probable she would bear at one sitting, I was to afford Mrs. Waverly entire ease, by listening (as in duty bound) to the *residuum*; which seemed, by its acrimony, to inflame her features, and agitate her whole frame—“ Daughter Frances,” cried she, “ have you heard lately from Mrs. Verney ?”

“ Yes, Madam.”

“ And pray where is she?”—

“ In France, Madam, at Meudon, where she was when she wrote to you”—

“ ’Tis false”—replied my mother, anger flashing from her eyes, and trembling

on her tongue—" 'tis a bare-faced, infamous falsehood, *and you know it is.*"

" Good God ! dear Madam ! you terrify and amaze me ! what can you mean ?"

" I mean, I mean—I dare hardly trust myself to utter a sentence so disgraceful—You, Miss, deceitful, worthless, wicked girl, know it, however, but too well."

" My dear Madam, what do I know ? For mercy's sake do not agitate yourself thus !—Whatever I know about our poor Geraldine, I am sure I never made any mystery of : tell me, I beseech you, what do I know ?"

" Odious, base, little hypocrite—you know that this disgrace to my blood, this viper who is to destroy the honour of my family, is *not* in France ; perhaps never has been there ; but has been, and is, I believe, in my conscience, still at that farm-house in Herefordshire, where she lived before—where she has lain-in—yes, Miss, lain-in of a girl, and is the declared mistress of that villain, Desmond, who has
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been there with her ; and, perhaps, is with her yet !”

The moment I could recover from my immediate surprise, the ridiculous impossibility of this story struck me so forcibly, that my terrors were, for a moment, dissipated ; and I recollected myself enough to say (perhaps with a look of too much contempt, considering it was my mother to whom I spoke) “ upon my word, Madam, a very curious legend—Have the goodness to tell me, to whose admirably fertile invention you owe it—If *dear, good* Miss Elford had not been quite removed from this part of the world, I should have given her the honour of it.”

I said this quite by guess, and not at all supposing I was right ; but I saw instantly, by my mother’s countenance, that my conjecture was just, and my alarm subsided still more. —I was now sure, that not only this falsehood, but the facts that happened during Geraldine’s real residence at Bridgefoot, came from Miss Elford ; and having

conquered

conquered my first perturbation, I managed the rest of the dialogue so as to procure from my mother's unguarded warmth, all the intelligence I desired; though it has not, on reflection, given my mind all the ease I expected.—Miss Elford has a relation whose residence is at Rofs, and to the house of this relation she retired, when overwhelmed with anguish and disappointment, by the sudden desertion of her mercenary lover.—The inn where the French nobleman and his *suite* put up, was exactly opposite this her melancholy retirement—A group much less marked by singularity of appearance, would have attracted the attention of an insulated being, eagerly attentive to every occurrence that afforded any thing to gratify her natural love of malicious enquiry, now sharpened by internal wretchedness and discontent—The foreigners no sooner appeared, than Miss Elford became stationary at her window, and she saw an Englishman with them, in whom she immediately

ately recollected the person of Mr. Desmond.

The chambermaid of the inn was well known to her; she contrived to send for her over, to pick out all she knew then of the guests, and to engage her to make farther enquiries.—In consequence of which the woman soon informed her, that Mr. Desmond had been living some time at the cottage at Bridgefoot, very near the residence of Mrs. Verney; that he returned thither before the foreign gentlemen, and afterwards accompanied Geraldine to Gloucester.—All this, with some additions of her own, was transmitted to my mother, under the strictest injunctions of secrecy.—This explains all those circumstances that gave me such pain and astonishment, when my mother had taken such a sudden antipathy to Mr. Desmond, and so strenuously insisted on Geraldine's going to her husband.

But how shall I account for what, on the same authority, my mother has now heard,

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heard, that my sister, attended by a gentleman, the description of whom answers to the person of Mr. Desmond, returned to Bridge-foot about three weeks since, where she was, in a few days, delivered of a daughter; that her attendants, consisting of two women, are French, who cannot speak a syllable of English.—The gentleman, who accompanied her, left the place about ten days ago; but the lady is supposed to be still there.

I know, that were not Geraldine incapable of such conduct, unversed in deceit, and possessing a heart as free from guilt as her mind is ingenuous and candid, there are numberless other objections to the probability of her being so situated—Yet, as Miss Elford had most certainly truth for the general ground of her former assertions, how is it possible to convince my mother that all she relates now is mere fabrication?—How is it possible to convince the malicious, prying world of this?—Indeed the particulars are so minute which Miss Elford has sent, it is almost impossible to suppose,

suppose, that with all her art, or all her malice, she could have the cunning to invent, or the effrontery so boldly to assert them, and to dare any one to disprove facts; which she assures my mother, only her tender regard for her could induce her to bring forward *so* positively—"My heart, *dear, dear*, Mrs. Waverly," says the canting prude, "my heart bleeds for every pang which justice and truth oblige me (to prevent your being deceived and imposed upon) thus to inflict on your's!"

Dear Sir! what am I to think of all this?—That my sister Geraldine, whom I know to be in France, should be at this village in Herefordshire, I know is impossible—I own it is much more likely that Miss Elford, through malice or error, or both, has invented the story, or taken some other person for her—Yet, as the report will not only be injurious to the fame of my beloved sister, but may be attended with consequences fatal to the life of *your* beloved friend—I own, that though I despised it at

at first, I now feel most completely alarmed; and entreat you to have the goodness to tell me, by the return of the post, whether you know where Mr. Desmond is; and whether you think any measures ought to be pursued; and what to prevent the farther progress of a calumny, from which so much mischief is to be apprehended.

Imagine with what impatience I wait to hear again from my sister—and how often I have examined and re-examined the contents and the post-marks of those letters I have already received from her.—When an evil, of whatever nature, is certain, the mind, by degrees, acquires firmness to endure it; but the pain of uncertainty and conjecture, like what I now suffer, is, of all others, the most intolerable—I have not closed my eyes during the last night; or have I had one moment's tranquillity of mind since my mother's angry communication—To add to my excessive vexation, she has related the whole, in the most unguarded way, to Mrs. Fairfax and her

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daughter, to my brother and his wife, and to a certain Lord Fordingbridge, who is here on a visit to Mr. Waverly; and, I think, the lover of Miss Anastatia—There are, therefore, no hopes of stifling the report; and if I can judge by the manner of the ladies, there is not one of them who fails to hope it may be found true.—Geraldine is too lovely, and has been too much admired, not to be disliked by women who are so remarkable for their wish to monopolize all admiration; and they are glad of an opportunity to exclude from the family a part of it, who might, they apprehend, in consequence of Verney's mad dissipation, be, at some time or other, a weight on the pecuniary interest of the rest.

Lord Fordingbridge met with Desmond abroad, and seems to have conceived some personal dislike to him.—My brother has been debating, whether he ought not to apply to him for immediate satisfaction; but of his pursuing that idea, I should not have very acute apprehensions, if I did not

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see that Lord Fordingbridge, towards whom he looks as to an oracle, (for he is reckoned a young man of eminent abilities) did not seem very much inclined to urge him to such a step—The whole conversation of the circle here, has been engrossed by this affair ever since yesterday; of course, it is terribly painful to me; but I dare not absent myself from it long together, and have stolen the time I have been writing this from my pillow, though not from my repose; for, till I am less distracted by conjectures and apprehensions, I have no hope of obtaining any.—Pardon, dear Sir, this incoherent letter—I really do not know what I am about; and never in my life had so much occasion for that friendly advice, with which you have so often honored and obliged,

Sir,

Your most grateful and obedient servant,

FRANCES WAVERLY.

LETTER XV.

TO MISS WAVERLY.

Hartfield, Sept. 28th, 1791.

IT was late last night, dear Madam, before I received your letter.—However I am flattered by being thus honored with your confidence, the purport of it has given me extreme uneasiness—the more so, as what I have to say, in reply, will not, I fear, relieve you from any part of your's.

I agree with you, however, in opinion—opinion, surely, founded on the securest ground; that our dear Mrs. Verney is incapable of the conduct which is, by Miss Elford's representation, and Mrs. Waverly's credulity, imputed to her—Yet, convinced as I must, on reflection, be of this, I am, at the same time, compelled to acknowledge, that there is an air of mystery in the letters of Mr. Desmond to

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me, so unlike his usual style of confidence and candor, that I account for it no other-wise than by supposing there is something in his situation, which it is necessary to conceal even from me.

These letters are not dated, so that I know not whither they come from, or how long they are written before I receive them.—But it is probable that Desmond is at a great distance, as he receives my letters, which are sent to the care of his bankers in London, very long after they are written.

I will own to you, that this reserve of my friend's, which I never, till lately, experienced from him, has hurt me extremely.—Yet, perhaps, I am wrong; there are circumstances and situations, which a man of honor cannot, and ought not, to reveal to his most intimate friends.

I thought, however, that, upon the footing we always have been together, I, who can have no object in view but his service, might attempt to discover how I

might more quickly convey my letters to him, particularly as some affairs, relative to one of his estates, required his immediate answer—I, therefore, wrote to the second partner in the banking-house he is connected with, who is more particularly entrusted with his concerns, and begged an address to Mr. Desmond, stating my reasons for asking it—I received last night a very polite answer from this gentleman, assuring me, that he would convey any letter to Mr. Desmond, as safely and expeditiously as possible; but, that to give his address, even to me, would be a breach of a promise solemnly given, which, he was sure, I would not ask him to commit.

What am I to think of this?—and why should Desmond's residence be a secret to me, unless — but I will not torment you or myself, dear Miss Waverly, with conjectures, which I stifle as soon as they arise—Perhaps I may have a letter from him to-day; but, as I send this to the post,

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at six miles distance, by the messenger, who brings back my letters, I cannot, if I wait the man's return, answer your's so soon as you desire—All I can now do, therefore, is to assure you, that I will send you the earliest intelligence I receive; and if such difficulties should arise, as make my being near of any use to you, in your present state of solicitude, in regard to friends so dear to us both, I will hasten my journey to Bath.—If I have any news of Desmond by the post of this day, I will write to-morrow.

I have the honor to be,

Dear Madam,

With great esteem,

Your most obedient and faithful servant,

E. BETHEL.

LETTER XVI.

TO MISS WAVERLY.

Hartfield, Sept. 29th, 1791.

DEAR MADAM,

IN pursuance of my promise, in my letter of yesterday, I enclose you a packet I received from Mr. Desmond, by the return of my messenger—Though it is wholly foreign to the topic that so deeply interests us, and can serve, perhaps, only to encrease uneasy apprehensions; for it must be remarked with wonder, that Desmond, who, with whatever subject he began his letters, generally spoke more of Mrs. Verney than any other, now seems to force himself upon political affairs, (about which, till a few months since, he was totally indifferent) in order to escape from naming her who once engrossed all his attention.

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The letter came, as usual, from his bankers in London; and, I own, serves rather to irritate than appease my uneasiness. I await your farther commands with impatience—

And am,

Dear Madam,

With perfect esteem,

Your most obliged servant,

E. BETHEL.

From some passages of the enclosed letter, one would conjecture that Desmond is in France—I know not what to think of it.

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LET.

LETTER XVII.

TO MR. BETHEL.

I THANK you, dear Bethel, for your account of my worthy uncle, whom you seem, indeed, to have studied more than I have done—Perhaps, according to worldly maxims, I have done wrong to have neglected him so much ; but, to the overbearing and dictatorial consequence he assumes, I never could submit, even if I had happened to *want* the advantage I might have acquired by it.—The gross epicurism in which he indulges himself, while he repeats, with exaggeration, the vices of others, are traits of character so offensive to me, that whenever we meet, I am far from gaining his good opinion by flattery and acquiescence ; and find it as much as I can do, to conceal the disgust I feel—As we see each other, however, so seldom,

dom, and I levy no tax either on his affections or his pocket, I could wish he would not remember our relationship only to make me the object of his enquiries and his comments.—What business has he to talk of Mrs. Verney?—he, who never in his life was sensible of an attachment to a woman of honor, nor was ever capable of understanding such a character as hers.—The gross and odious reflections which he has taken the unwarrantable liberty to utter, I should find it impossible to avoid resenting, were he still nearer related to me—I hope, therefore, before I see him again, that he will be furnished with some other topic of conversation, by his coffee-house friends at Bath.—Men who having once had active bodies and inactive minds, are now deprived, by disease, of the former advantage, and are compelled to give to their shallow understandings obnoxious activity, to prevent a total stagnation of existence; or by the silly women, at whose card parties he passes his evenings, many of whom

owe the prodigious virtue on which they value themselves, to that want of personal beauty, which prevented their ever being in danger.

“*Castus est, quam nemo rogavit,*”

says the proverb—Heaven forgive me, if I judge uncharitably, but I very much suspect, that in common minds among the sex, this extreme and exquisite sense of delicacy, which always acquires peculiar energy after thirty-five, is much oftener the offspring of disappointed pride, than angelic purity—Among the good matrons and virgins of this description, my uncle is a very oracle—Among them he retails the conversation of the morning, and they make up together, in their evening vigils, these scandalous anecdotes, from even which Geraldine cannot escape, though, if they had not the power to give her a moment's pain, I am sure they would not give me a moment's thought.—Now, however, she is in France, and these arrows

“dipped

"dipped in double poison," will not, I trust, reach her, unless some "*d—n'd good natured friend*"* should take the trouble, in *pure kindness*, to feather the shafts so as that they may reach her.

I remember, that when I used to see more of Major Danby than I have now done for these last years, I used to consider, with some degree of wonder, the odd construction of his mind, which nature intended to be a good, plain, common mind; but having acquired a roughness, from being early in life a soldier of fortune, he saw himself in unexpected affluence, at a middle period of life, when he had learned the value of money, by having struggled with the want of it—And the moment he quitted his profession, he lost the open, manly character it gives, and acquired nothing meritorious in place of those qualities; for he became a little of a literary man—a little more of a politician—still more of an epicurean—and above

* The Critic.

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all, a man of great consequence to himself—His mind now resembles a quilt I have seen at an inn, composed by the industrious landlady, in a sort of work, which, I believe, the women call patch-work; triangular or square shreds sewn together to form a motley whole—here a little bit of chintz, surrounded by pieces of coarse and tawdry cotton; there a piece of decca work, joined to a scrap of dowlas; in one place a remnant of the fine gown of the Lady of the manor; in the next, a reliet of the bed-gown of her house-maid—So oddly, in the composition of my good uncle, is a fragment of gentleman-like qualities tacked to great patches of obsolete principles and hard prejudices—to an obstinate adherence to his own gratifications, and a prodigious attachment to his own imagined consequence—But a truce with the Major—I have bestowed more words upon him than ever I recollect to have done before, and more than, perhaps, I shall ever do again.

In wandering round the world, I hear more of politics than of any other subject—and I am always glad to attend to them, when the events under discussion are of consequence enough to attract my attention, and detain it a little from the internal wretchedness I bear about me.

The enemies of the French revolution are, at present, in dismay—for the King has signed the constitution, and they begin seriously to fear that the liberties of France will be firmly established—Their great hope, however, is in the confederacy of “the kings of the earth” against it, particularly that of the Northern powers; which, if they do unite, will be the first instance, in the annals of mankind, of an union of tyrants to crush a people who profess to have no other object than to obtain, for themselves, that liberty which is the undoubted birth-right of all mankind—I do not, my friend, fear that all “these tyrannous breathings of the North” will destroy the lovely tree that has thus taken
vigorous

vigorous root in the finest country of the world, though it may awhile check its growth, and blight its produce; but I lament, that in despite of the pacific intentions of the French towards their neighbours, its root must be manured with blood—I lament still more, the disposition which too many Englishmen shew to join in this unjust and infamous *crusade* against the holy standard of freedom; and I blush for my country!

I must, however, remark, that those in whom I have observed this disposition, are all either courtiers themselves, or connected with courtiers—And I know not whether to admire most their *English* sentiments or their *English* versatility; for among them, I recollect, are some gentlemen, who, three years since, when the speeches of Mr. Burke were said to press so hardly on a gentleman then, and still before the highest tribunal of his country, exclaimed against the proceedings of that great orator with the utmost indignation—They then declar-

ed,

ed, in all companies, that he prostituted his eminent talents to the purposes of party—and, to the purposes of party, sacrificed his veracity.

But now, when in the book written against the patriots of France, he has done the same thing—when he advances opinions, and maintains principles absolutely opposite to all the professions of his political life—when he dresses up contradictions with the gaudy flowers of his luxuriant imagination, in one place, and in another, knowingly misrepresents facts, and swells the guilt of a *few*, into national crimes; to prove the delinquency of a whole people struggling for the dearest rights of humanity, Mr. Burke is become, in the opinion of these my courtier acquaintance, the most correct, as well as the most eloquent of men—for he is of their party—he is become the champion of the placeman—and the apologist of the pensioner.

As for his political adversaries, who have taken up the gauntlet, he has chosen to throw

throw down—What have they done to excite such a terrible outcry?—They have shewn many prejudices, which we have been so accustomed to, that we never thought of looking at them.

They have endeavored to convince us of the absurdity and folly of war—the inefficacy of conquest—the imposition which all European nations have submitted to, who have, for ages, paid for the privilege of murdering each other—These writers have told us what, I apprehend, Locke, and Milton, and Bacon, and (what is better than all) common sense has told us before, that government is not for the benefit of the governors, but the governed; that the people are not transferrable like property; and their money is very ill bestowed, when, instead of preventing the evils of poverty, it is taken from them, to support the wanton profusion of the rich.—And what is there in all this, that in other times, Mr. Burke himself, and Mr. Burke's associates, have not repeatedly re-echoed through their speeches?—Once, it is certain, these gentlemen

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lemen seemed to agree with Voltaire, who somewhere says,

“ A mesure que les pays sont barbares, ou que les cours sont faible, le cérémonial est plus en vogue—La vrai puissance, & la vrai politesse, dedaignent la vanité.”*

But let us allow, in contradiction to Mr. Burke's former opinion, (who once wished to see even the sun of royalty shorn of his superfluous beams) let us allow, that a very great degree of splendor should surround the chief magistrate of a great and opulent nation—Let us allow, that the illustrious personage, who now fills that character, has, from his private and public virtues, a claim to the warmest affections of his people; that towards him and his family, the greatest zeal and attachment should be felt, and every support of his dignity chearfully given; yet, can it be denied, that the people are enduring

* In proportion as countries are rude, or their governments feeble, ceremony is more requisite—True power and true politeness, alike disdain pageantry and vanity.

needless

needleless burthens, with which all this has nothing to do?

Let any man (whose name neither is, nor is ever likely to be in the court-calendar (the red book) look deliberately over it—let him reckon up the places that are there enumerated—a great many of which are sinecures—let him enquire the real amount of the salaries annexed to them, (for *they* are *not* enumerated) and the real services performed—then let him consider whether these places would exist, but for the purposes of corruption—let him reckon of how many oppressive taxes the annihilation of these places, would preclude the necessity.

I might add, that the list of pensioners, could it ever be fairly got at, might come under the same consideration—Is there upon that list *many*, are there *any* names, that have found a place there because their owners have grown old, without growing rich in the service of their country?—Does deserted merit? does indigent genius find, in the bounty of that country, an honorable resource

source against unmerited misfortune? Alas! no!—To those who have only *such* recommendations, the pursuit of *court favor* is hopeless indeed—But the meretricious nymph receives, with complacent smiles, the superannuated pander of a noble patron, his cast mistresses, his illegitimate children, his discarded servants, his aunts, great aunts, and fifth cousins—If the nobleman himself is a sure ministerial man in the upper house, he is sure of some degree of favor; but it is measured to him in proportion to the influence he has in the lower; and it is to reward *such men*, to gratify their dependents, that the poor pittance of the mechanic is lessened—the prices of the most necessary articles of life raised upon the “smutched artificer,” and a share of his fourteen pence a day “wrung from the hard hands” of the laborer.

Either these things are true, or they are not—If they are *not* true, the persons who are interested in the refutation of them, are marvellously silent!—If they *are true*, can
your

your most enthusiastic admiration of our present glorious establishment, conceal from you, that they should be put an end to?

You say, my dear Bethel, that you wish for my society in our favorite county—If ever I should return thither, to meet you, would be my principal, indeed only inducement; but, alas! warm and sincere as my friendship for you is, it cannot alone replace, it cannot make amends for all I have lost; yet, I know, you will say I have lost nothing that I ever possessed; and that if I could once determine to look out for some other enjoyments than those my romantic fancy had described, I might yet find as reasonable a portion of happiness as any human being has a right to expect—All this may be very true, and very reasonable; but I have, unhappily, a degree of felicity, impressed on my mind, *which was once attainable*; and though I know it is attainable no longer, I am like the unhappy man who is said to have died in consequence of the love he had conceived

ceived for a picture, which, after many enquiries, proved to be that of the fair Gabrielle—I know there are a hundred, nay, a thousand other plans and people, with whom other men might sit down contented; but I have made up a “*fair idea*,” and losing that, all is to me a blank.

You are always lamenting, in the warmth of your friendly zeal, that my prospects are thus blasted on my entrance into life; but why?—What do you call their being blasted?—I might, it is true, be a member of parliament, and give a silent vote for, or make an unregarded speech against government, which my slight influence could not render better or worse—I might have married some fine lady, with a fine fortune, who would have done me the honor to bear my name abroad, and rendered me completely wretched at home; and this you call, my good friend, following my prospects—Alas! I would not recall uneasy recollections to your mind, but I must ask—Did *you* find happiness in this career,

career, which you now lament my neglecting to pursue?—Or can you decide, whether I shall finally be wrong or right in following one very opposite.

It is amazing to me, that with your mind, you cannot comprehend the delight of living only for one beloved object, though hopeless of any other return than what the purest friendship may authorise—It is still more wonderful that you cannot understand this, when this object is Geraldine, of whom you think so highly—Oh! Bethel! is it possible you can have seen her in those scenes which have called forth all the perfections of that lovely mind, and not allow me to be right, when I say with Petrarch—

“*Par me consola, che languir per lei
Meglio e, che gioir d'altra—*”

Adieu! my friend, continue to write to me; and be assured ever of the truest attachment and regard of

Your's,

LIONEL DESMOND.

LETTER XVIII.

TO MR. BETHEL.

Bath, Oct. 3, 1791.

DEAR SIR,

A SLIGHT indisposition that my mother has had, and the sudden departure of Mr. and Mrs. Waverly, to visit some distant friends of the Fairfax family, brought us back to Bath sooner than we intended—Your last letter followed me hither; and, in thanking you for it, and for that it enclosed from Mr. Desmond, I have to inform you of some very singular circumstances that have happened since our return.

I was surprised yesterday morning, by the servant's informing me that a French gentleman was below, and desired to speak to me; my mother was in the room,

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and

and I could not conceal my apprehensions, that this stranger brought me some intelligence of Geraldine—I trembled : I asked her whether she would be pleased to admit him ?

“ What kind of a man is he ? ” enquired Mrs. Waverly, sternly, of Matthew.

“ Lord, Madam,” replied he, “ quite a gentleman-like, handsomish-kind of a man ; really a good-looking person, considering he is a foreigner.”

“ Let him be shewn up,” answered my mother, who had not so much intended enquiring after his good looks, as whether they were the looks of a visitor, or of a solicitor of charity—“ I cannot speak to him,” said she, “ you must make out the child, what his business is.”

I had not time to analyse the confused emotions I felt, before a gentleman entered the room, who appeared to me one of the most elegant men I had ever seen—If his person prejudiced me in his favor, you may believe that favorable prejudice was

not

not lessened, when he announced himself to be Monsieur de Montfleuri; the intimate and beloved friend of Desmond.

I felt instantly as if I had known him for ages; and was sorry I could not acquire courage to tell him so in his own language; yet he spoke English extremely well, and divided his attentions with so much true politeness between my mother and me, that though she was prepared to dislike him, first, because he was a foreigner, and secondly, because he was the avowed friend of Desmond, she insensibly relaxed into a smile, then gave him a general invitation to her house during his visit to Bath; and, before he took leave, even pressed him to make her house his most usual home—He answered, that his stay at Bath would be short, but that he should most undoubtedly avail himself of her obliging permission to pay his respects to her.

He left us—and during his visit had never named Mr. Desmond, but in his introductory speech—I longed to ask him

where he was, but was with-held by a thousand fears that have since appeared ridiculous—I would have asked him in French, but as he spoke English so well, it would have been unpolite ; yet I suffered inconceivable anxiety till evening, when I was engaged to go to a ball, at the upper-rooms, where, I flattered myself, I should meet him—I was not disappointed—Montfleuri was the first person I saw on entering the room—He immediately came up to me ; and as he did not think himself qualified to join in English country dances, and as I was the only person in the room with whom he was acquainted, I disengaged myself from the gentleman with whom I was going to dance, and had a great deal of conversation with Monsieur de Montfleuri, which, of course, turned principally on Mr. Desmond.

You will easily imagine, dear Sir ! how earnestly I wished to ask him several questions about his friend ; but, though he spoke in the most unreserved terms of the
good

good qualities of Desmond, and of their long friendship, I observed, that he carefully avoided saying much of his present situation or prospects—At length, I ventured to ask him where his friend now was?—He replied, that he did not certainly know, as it was some time since he heard from him—“Is he,” said I, afraid of pressing too far on a subject, from which he seemed to recede, “is he in France or in England?”

Montfieur de Montfleuri, whose eyes are the most penetrating I ever saw, looked at me as if he would read my very soul—I shrunk, I believe, from his enquiring and piercing eyes; for, I own, they distressed me extremely—nor did what he said serve to relieve me—“Desmond,” said he, “is a very fortunate man, to occasion to you, Mademoiselle, so much friendly solicitude”—I believe I looked very foolish; and, though I hardly know why, I was discouraged from repeating my question.

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But,

But, on consideration, after I returned home, my anxiety was by no means abated by an interview, which, I had hoped, would entirely subdue it—The more I considered the conversation I had with Monsieur de Montfleuri, the more I was persuaded, that there was some mystery hung over the present situation of Desmond.—I have seen Monsieur de Montfleuri this morning; he dines with us to-day; and says, that though he came to Bath with no other intention than to pay his compliments to us, and a family from France, with whom he is acquainted; yet he is so flattered by the civility he has received, and so happy in being allowed the honor of cultivating our acquaintance, that he shall prolong his stay, and not return to France for, at least, a fortnight.

Dear Sir! how shall I remain so long in suspense about this odious report?—Yet I feel it to be impossible to speak of it to Monsieur de Montfleuri, nor do I dare

entrust

entrust my mother with such a delicate negotiation ; for, it is but too probable, that she would speak of Desmond, perhaps of my sister, with asperity, that would be extremely improper, and would defeat her purpose.

I have reason to believe that her intelligence fails, either by the removal of Miss Elford, or the disappearance of those objects, whoever they were, that gave her ground for her report ; for, within these few days, my mother has not renewed the conversation ; but seems again occupied by some scheme for the aggrandizement of Mr. Waverly.

In the mean time, I have observed, with wonder, the favor Monsieur de Montfleuri has obtained in her sight—For him, she seems to have conquered her aversion to foreigners ; and her peculiar aversion to Frenchmen—nay, she is almost persuaded, that since he is a partizan of the French revolution, it cannot be quite so dreadful a thing as people have represented it.—I

never observed so strong and prompt an effect, from elegance of manners, (which he certainly possesses in an eminent degree)—as in this sudden impression Montfleuri has made on my mother—But it must, however, be added, that she has pretty good intelligence as to his fortune, knows it to be a very large one, at present, and likely to be much encreased by his accession to the estate of the Count d’Hauteville, his uncle, whose only heir he is.—You know my mother well enough to understand, that were Monsieur Montfleuri a Cherokee, or a Chicksaw, his country would be no objection to a place in her esteem, if he had a *good property*; and his manners and understanding, though they were the first in the world, no recommendation to her favor without it.

But I am writing on, as if you had nothing else to do but to attend to my letters—pray pardon me; and recollect, in my excuse, that I have not, in the world, any other person to whom I can open my heart

heart on the cruel subject which weighs upon it.

What I meant to ask of you, (though I have made so many digressions, still unwilling to intrude upon you with what may, perhaps, be an improper request) is, whether there would be any impropriety in *your* writing to Montfleuri, to ask intelligence about our friend—Perhaps this is impracticable—if it is, pray forget my asking; and forgive it, in consideration of the excessive anxiety I feel.—I have had no letter from Geraldine; and every hour encreases that solicitude, which I can neither satisfy or repress.

Whatever you have learned, I beg to hear by an early post; and that I may be allowed to remain,

Sir,

Your much obliged,

And most obedient servant,

FRANCES WAVERLY.

L 5

I enclose, in one of the franks that brings this voluminous letter, a billet from dearest Louisa, who impatiently expects your return to Bath.—I have not once broken your injunction, not to take her to a ball, or any public meeting, till you come.

LET.

LETTER XIX.

TO MISS WAVERLY.

Hartfield, Oct. 7, 1792.

DEAR MADAM,

IT is, indeed, impracticable for me to apply to Mr. de Montfleuri, to enquire into the past conduct or actual situation of Mr. Desmond; if there are any circumstances in that conduct with which he has chosen rather to confide to M. de Montfleuri than to me, you will see at once the impropriety of *my* expressing any curiosity on affairs with which he did not himself think proper to entrust me.—I lament that I cannot, in this instance, obey your commands with that alacrity which it would, on almost any other occasion, be my pride to shew.

As to the report which you have traced to Miss Elford, and which has given you

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so much disquiet, perhaps it is best to let it die of itself.—I shall, in a few days . . . I was here interrupted by the arrival of a messenger from W. bringing the inclosed extraordinary letter; which, from the direction—"to be forwarded instantly"—the post-master sent over, without waiting for the arrival of the servant I usually send—I am too much confused, by the contents of this letter, to be able to make any remarks on it; or, indeed, to advise what should be done.

Let me hear as soon as you have received and considered it; and, if I can be of any use, I will instantly set out for Bath—though I know not what good I can do; or, indeed, what can be done at all.

I am, dear Miss Waverly,

Your faithful servant,

E. BETHEL.

LET.

LETTER XX.*

TO MR. BETHEL.

Paris, Oct. 1, 1791.

IT were vain to attempt secrecy any longer—She is gone!—She is gone to meet that very fate from which I have, with watchful affection, been endeavouring to save her.—I left her only for one day on indispensable business—I found, on my return, that she was set out on a moment's notice for the South of France, by the direction of her husband. Alone!—she is gone alone! and has not taken even a servant with her.—Her children, to whom she has always been so tenderly attached, she has left at Meudon, to the care of servants; and in such haste did

* This letter was enclosed to Miss Waverly by Mr. Bethel.

she

she depart, that she gave no direction whether she should be written to.—It is some infamous stratagem of De Romagnecourt's to get her into his power—And I, fool that I was, have been afraid of openly avowing myself, of taking those measures which would have saved her; and now, perhaps, now it is too late!—Whither can I turn me? what can I do?—To sit down quietly under the apprehensions that crowd upon my mind, is impossible.

I am this moment returned from Meudon, where, by a mere accident, I witnessed the distress of her servants, left with the children in such a state of anxiety and suspense.—She gave to the young woman, who has long lived with her, all the money she had about her, and an order on Bergasse for more.—This has given me the only ray of comfort I have received—Bergasse may inform me whither she is gone, and I will instantly follow her, whatever may be the consequences.—She said to the servants, that Mr. Verney was wounded

wounded in a quarrel, and lay very ill in the neighbourhood of Avignon; and that thither she was going to him—But it is not so; it is a *finesse* of Romagnecourt's, to which her husband has lent his name.—It is impossible to describe to you what I feel—I will leave my letter open till I return from speaking to Bergasse. (Three o'clock)—I have seen him; all he could inform me was, that about five, yesterday evening, Mrs. Verney came to him in great apparent distress.—She read to him part of a letter, written by Mr. Verney, in an hand hardly legible, which informed her of his having been wounded in a scuffle in the streets of Avignon, and laying in great danger at a cottage about two miles from the town, where he entreated her to hasten to him, that he might put into her hands the means of securing his remaining fortune to his children; and ask and obtain forgiveness for all the injuries he had done to them, and to herself.

Bergasse

Bergasse assured me, he endeavoured to dissuade her from setting out alone, on such an occasion, and for a part of the country, where to travel, is really hazardous.—She answered, should Mr. Verney die, without having seen her, she should never forgive herself, or ever taste again one moment's content.—That to personal danger, she was totally indifferent, and only entreated him to supply her family at Meudon with money; and if she did not return within a month, to send them back to England, to the care of her mother.—

“I never saw,” said Bergasse, “so lovely a woman, nor ever felt so interested for any one before—I would have laid down my life, at that moment, to have served her; but what could I do?—she would not hear of sending any other person to enquire into the real situation of her husband; she would not hear of my procuring any person to accompany her, who would she said, be of no use to her—All that she would suffer me to do, for her service, was

to hire a chaise, as lighter and more expeditious than the coach she came in from England—I saw her get into it—She promised to write to me the instant she got to the place described by Mr. Verney's letter—I saw her depart."

Though it was very true, that Mr. de Bergasse could do no more, I could, in the agony of mind I was in, have cursed him, for not stopping her—I gave him however, a draft for money, that her children may be assured of a supply; and I now write this, my dear Bethel, while Warham is gone for the post horses, on which I will instantly follow this dear unhappy, but ever adorable woman—Good God!—my senses forsake me, when I reflect the hazardous journey she has undertaken; when I reflect that she has perhaps thrown herself into the hands of an unprincipled monster, in a country where he has probably power to execute whatever he undertakes, and where, the confusion it is in, may give him unquestioned opportunity

tunity to commit any outrage with impunity—

Warham is at the door with the horses—I fly to overtake her—that may not yet be impossible—this hope alone animates me—

I would write to Fanny Waverly, and to Montfleuri, for all mystery must now be at an end—But I know not, very exactly, where Montfleuri is; and if you send this, or the purport of it, to Miss Waverly, it will save me time—God bless you my dear friend?—Oh! would you were here to assist me, in the pious office of saving the most perfect of human beings, from a fate so dreadful, as that, which I am persuaded, awaits Geraldine.

LIONEL DESMOND.

L E T.

LETTER XXI.

TO MR. DESMOND.

Bath, in England, this
18th Oct. 1791.

THERE is nothing, you have told me sometimes, more singular than I am—You might have added, unless it be yourself.—But I am going to give you, my friend, a new proof of my eccentricity, for after having escaped till now, and having borne away an unwounded heart, from eyes, the brightest that France, or England, or America could produce, I am desperately in love—Mad! for your Mrs. Verney's sister, and shall most certainly marry the lovely little Fanni, if she will accept of me—Why did you not give me notice of the danger that awaited me in coming here?—It was not right to suffer me to run into an embarrassment that you know, I have always had the presentiment,

timent, would be a very serious one if ever it came to me—I have vowed a hundred times never to marry, but this beautiful little Englishwoman who can resist?—My affairs however, are in a prosperous train—The good mamma looks kindly upon me, and my charming Fanni, does not hate me, if there is any trusting to the language of the eyes—There is a brother it seems, to be consulted; but I imagine, if my goddess and I agree, we shall neither the one, or the other, pay great attention to his opinion—I do not love to be long in suspense, and, when I determine to commit a folly, I like to have it over at once—So I go this day to Mistress Waverly, to make my overture in form, for to tell the truth, I have already secured the fair Fanni, who is a little afraid the mother may make some objection, on the account of religion; but I am much in a mistake, or the idol of *her* worship is money; and, if she does not fancy, that since the revolution, all the lands in France have agreed

not.

not to bear corn, wine, and oil—I persuade me that I can make out an account of my estate, which will satisfy all her scruples about the *soul* of her daughter, which assuredly, I shall not lead out of the path that has been followed by the *souls of her ancestors*, or divert, from any other, it may like better to follow—*My* ambition lying quite in *another line*—If I bring matters to a speedy conclusion, I shall be married like a good Lutheran or Calvinist, or whatever is orthodox in the British church—and, having secured my sweet little English woman, according to her own ritual, shall set forward immediately for France—This, I suppose, is the only thing I have done these four years, that will please Monseigneur le Comte d’Hauteville, to whom I mean to announce it in due form.—He may now flatter himself that his family will not be utterly extinguished; but what signifies it, when they will be under the cruel necessity of being only *Messieurs*, and not *Mes Seigneurs*—My good uncle, however, lives
in

in hopes of a counter-revolution, and piously puts up his orisons for an invasion of his native country by Austrians, Russians, and Prussians, to restore Frenchmen to their senses and their *seignories*—The remedy, it must be confessed, is somewhat violent.

I pray you, Desmond, to write to me immediately, and tell me what part of France I shall find you in. I hope you are made quite content by the purport of my last letter, as to the subject of our long and mutual inquietude.—Nothing but silence and prudence is wanting now to put an end to all farther pain upon this affair; and I differ so much from all the rest of the world in such circumstances, that, I think, I have done much better than if I had killed my friend, or been killed myself, because he was amiable, and my sister was a woman.—An Epicurean is, at least, a peaceable animal.—Poor Josephine is quite well in London; and, by this time, you have seen Madame Verney in possession of her charge.

charge.—If Boisselle should have his head broke,* as I think it very likely he may, we might make a double wedding—if, however, Josephine should alter her mind—Unless that happens, I hope you will never meet, though I have no great notion that her convent scheme will hold long.

I direct this to you by your usual address at Paris.—I expect an immediate answer—and your felicitations on my having, at last, taken a resolution to marry, and become an honest man, which you have so often recommended; I hope I shall not repent it—but I have doubts about the wisdom of it sometimes.—If my wife should be ill-tempered, I shall run away from her—If she should be dull, I shall be weary of her—fatigued, if she have the folly to be jealous of me—and if she be very much a coquette, I shall be jealous of

* A broken head in England conveys a very different idea, but "*lui casser la tête*"—means, in the French idiom, to shoot a man through the head, or kill him.

her.

her.—How many rocks are here, in this perilous voyage, on which to wreck one's happiness!—but never mind!—courage!—I am determined to venture—My Fanni is a little angel, and I must have her—There is a good many chances of being reasonably happy with her, at least, for three or four years, and that is as much as any body has a right to expect.—I find I am unreasonably unhappy without her, and every time I see her I become more and more intoxicated with my passion. How, if our good mamma should refuse her consent?—I do believe, that if such a perverse accident should arrive, I have interest enough with my nymph to persuade her to trust herself with me without it, and take our chance for forgiveness afterwards—But this is unlikely—I shall give the old lady a *carte blanche*, and let her name her own trustees—O! *Ça ira—Ça ira!*

Ever devotedly your's,

My dear friend,

JONVILLE DE MONTFLEURI.

Do

Do you not think I improve in my English?—Since I have been acquainted with my Fanni, I have thrown away my dictionary.

I have undone my letter again, to say to you, that I have Mrs. Waverly's full consent, and am the most happy of men.

Evening of Wednesday,
7 o'clock.

Still I have to add—My Fanni has received the letter you wrote from Paris, the first of this month, which you sent to that Mr. Bethel, who is to be her trustee.—This hastens our marriage—It is fixed for Sunday; and we come to France instantly.—I am almost as uneasy as my dear girl is, who has done nothing but weep ever since, at the fate of her sister. Desmond, you have not ever been quite so ingenuous with me about Mrs. Verney, as I had, I think, a claim to expect. We shall go immediately to Meudon, to the

four children who are there ; and, surely, by the time of our arrival, there will be received some account of what is become of you and Mrs. Verney ; her husband too ! — I did not think any thing could have given me so much concern.

LET.

LETTER XXII.

TO MR. BETHEL.

Oct. 23, 1791.

NEVER, my dear Bethel, did the most feverish dreams of fiction produce scenes more painful, or more terrific, than the real events to which I have been a witness, and in which I have been an actor, since the date of my last letter—They are far from being yet at an end—With anxiety, such as it is impossible to describe, I await the catastrophe!—but I owe it to you, to put you, as soon and as much as I can, out of the suspense and uneasiness in which my last letter involved you, though, possibly, it be only to give you new suspense and new uneasiness—Before this letter reaches you, however, my fate, must probably be decided.

M 2

I write

I write from the cabin of a Vigneron, at Salon, near Avignon—How I came hither, and the extraordinary circumstances that attended my journey, I will endeavour to collect my agitated and scattered thoughts enough to tell you.

As well as I remember, I wrote to you very hastily from Paris, in consequence of Mrs. Verney's sudden departure, who was then gone forward alone, to attend her husband; who represented himself wounded and dying in the neighbourhood of Avignon; but that you may more clearly comprehend the whole of the subsequent narrative, it may, perhaps, be necessary to tell you how I came so well acquainted with the situation and sudden removal of Geraldine.

You have remonstrated with me so often and so vainly, on my passion for her, that the subject was sometime since exhausted between us—I could not, however, so candidly reveal to you my purpose, as I had, on almost every occasion of my life,

been

been accustomed to do, for reasons, with which she had no concern; but if I did not relate my actions, I attempted not to put on them any false appearance; and since I could not tell you the truth, I forbore to date my letters, and would not mislead you by misrepresentations; which, had I not abhorred every kind of deception, might have been easily done—I must now, however, relate as much as concerns my own wanderings—undertaken from a motive which, however blameable it might appear, I could not contend with—The event has shewn that, where the *intention* is perfectly pure, it is not always wrong to follow the dictates of the heart, even when they impel us to act contrary to the maxims of the world, and even in defiance of its censure.

Know then, my dear Bethel, that when you sent me intelligence of the sudden departure of Geraldine for France—when I heard, that the persevering infamy of her husband, and the unfeeling brutality of

her mother, contributed to drive her into the snare from which I believed, I had seen her secured, when she quitted Herefordshire—I could not patiently await the event—I determined, though with anxiety of a very different kind upon my mind; to follow her, and to protect her, if possible, from the wretch, who would thus basely avail himself of his legal right to render wretched, this most lovely and injured woman—Compared with her safety, every other consideration on earth was insignificant; yet I was conscious that, were it known, even by her own family, I had followed her to France, some part of the inconvenience, from which it was the wish of my life to save her, would be incurred; and that conviction, added to other circumstances, compelled me to conceal my intentions even from you.

I sat out for Brighthelmstone the very next day after I had intelligence of her departure, and travelling along the coast, I reached that place late in the evening of the

next

next day.—Geraldine and her family were at the Old Ship waiting for a wind—I dared not, therefore, go to that house, which I on other occasions used to frequent, but I took a private lodging; and ordered my servants, who were known, because they have both lived with me so many years, to keep out of sight.

The wind was so high and so contrary for three days, that the packet she was going in could not get out—It was not possible for me to engage my passage in the same vessel—Others were on the point of sailing with the change of the wind; but, as these might wait for passengers, and I might thus be detained after her, I chose rather to hire one of the largest fishing boats, the master of which, for a certain consideration, was to convey me to Dieppe, and to sail immediately after the packet.—The air of mystery I was compelled to observe, and the high terms I was willing to give for a conveyance so apparently inferior to the packets, excited in

the fishermen, with whom I opened my negociation, much surprize and many conjectures; the most favourable of which, to me were, that I had been engaged in a duel, and, from its fatal consequences, was compelled to make my escape; or, that I was employed by Government to carry on some negociation with the French aristocratic party, and was going to Paris *incog.* for fear of the *reverbere* of the democracy; yet, I am persuaded, notwithstanding the credit I obtained for these gentleman-like motives, that if there had, just at that time, happened to have been any delinquent sought for by public justice, who was supposed likely to attempt escaping to France, I should have stood a chance of being carried to Lewes, and committed for further examination.

After thirty-six tedious hours, during which I never ventured out but of a night, for a solitary walk along the westward shore, where there was the least danger of my meeting any of my acquaintance, (of whom

I found

I found the place was full;) the wind changed, and a steady gale springing from the north-east, the packet came out of harbour in the evening of the second day; and, at seven o'clock in the evening, I had notice from Warham, whom I had sent to *reconnoitre*, that the passengers were about to embark.

I would have given the world to have dared assist the beautiful and interesting exile, who I could only watch at a distance.—I buttoned a horseman's coat round me, pulled my hat over my eyes, and in a crowd of French and English who were bustling around the door of the ship tavern, to get their baggage down to the shore, I ventured to pass quite close to the lovely but melancholy group, for which my anxious heart was so deeply affected—I saw Geraldine pale, languid, and dejected, yet forcing herself to appear calm and chearful, in order to quiet the apprehensions of her English servant, Peggy, who had never seen the sea before,

M 5

fore, and now hung back, afraid of venturing on an element which she had beheld a few hours before, black with tempests that threatened destruction.—The poor girl, who was weeping bitterly, had the youngest child in her arms; the old Frenchwoman carried little Harriet; and the eldest boy was led by his mother, who endeavoured to quiet his eager enquiries of what they were going to do?

They proceeded thus down to the sea; I still remained within hearing, for I observed that Geraldine was too much absorbed in attention to her children, to make many observations on the objects around her; and, I believed, it was impossible for her to know me.—I saw her, Bethel, with calm resolution step forward to meet her destiny; for herself she seemed to suffer nothing, but towards the sea, which was still high, and the rough waves breaking at her feet, she seemed to cast her imploring eyes, and then turned them, humid with tears, which she yet struggled to suppress,

press, on her children.—George, who had been very silent for a moment, now asked, whether they were all to go on that great pond?—His mother, in a faltering voice, replied—“Yes, my love, I hope you are not afraid?”—“No;” replied the dear little fellow, “not afraid, Mamma, of going, if you go—but see how frightened poor Harriet is, let us not take her if she is so frightened.”

The little girl, terrified at the noise of the people, and the rushing of the water, now reached out her arms to her mother, who soothed her, as she hid her face in her bosom—This obliged her to disengage her hand from George, who alarmed at the privation, clung to her gown, fixing his expressive eyes eagerly on her face, and refusing the attention of your servant, honest Thomas, who would have taken him up in his arms—Had a painter been there, who could have been indifferent enough to the scene to have exercised his art, he might have made a

sketch of this group that would have spoken most forcibly to the heart—what then must I have felt, who was within ten yards of Geraldine, and dared not speak to her?

The baggage was now stowed, and the boat ready to put off—I had need of all my resolution at that moment, and all the consideration of the ill consequences that might attend my rashness, to prevent my stepping forward to take her in my arms to the boat; but a gigantic son of the ocean, stalked in his sea boots through the waves like another Polypheme, and seizing her and her child, which clung shrieking to her bosom, lifted them into it; while another, with as little ceremony, carried off Peggy and the infant she had the charge of; your good old Thomas took care of the little boy, whom he placed close to his mother; the French gentlewoman followed, and all the passengers being now embarked, the boat, with a furious crash, put off from the whingles—the spray flashed over it, and I saw in the pale and dismayed countenance

of

of Peggy, that she gave herself up for lost.—Geraldine, I believe, was sensible of nothing but the terrors of her children, whom she now collected round her, having the two youngest of them in her arms, and the eldest clinging to her—I saw her countenance as she hung over them—and never, never shall I lose the impression it made on my heart.

The boat now made its way quickly towards the packet—I sent Warham away to order my honest fisherman to be ready; and, while my boat was preparing, I went up to the high cliffs on the eastern end of the town, to mark the progress towards the packet, of that, which contained the being to whom my heart is devoted.

Had I not before determined to follow her, I should now have done it; so terrible did the encreasing distance appear, as leaning over the cliff, I parodied the speech of Imogen, and as the boat lessened to my view, I could, like her, have

“ Turn’d mine eyes and wept.”

But

But it was now more to the purpose to hasten after her ; I saw the men were ready. Warham and John had brought and stowed my baggage ; I went down to the shore and threw myself into the boat ; and desiring the men to set all the canvas they had, the light vessel overtook and passed the packet before it was quite dark, and at four o'clock the next morning I landed at Dieppe, some hours before the packet.

I might now, perhaps, without any fear of subjecting Geraldine to remarks, have appeared ; but I knew so well that though the world should be silent, she herself would be rendered uneasy by it, that I checked myself ; and though, on the road, I never was a league distant from her, she had not the least suspicion of my being in the same country.

At Paris I took up my abode in another hotel in the same street, and as she was wholly given up to her children, and never went out, it was not difficult to escape being known.—It was an infinite relief to

me

me to learn, that Mr. Verney was not at Paris, and that Geraldine steadily refused to take up her residence at the hotel of Monsieur de Romagnecourt, whither he had consigned her—for about eight days after her arrival, she removed to Meudon; and thither, though it could not be done without difficulty, I determined to attend her.

If your friend, my dear Bethel, had been so disposed, he could, perhaps, have performed the Proteus of intrigue, as well as any modern hero in that line of acting—but, in this instance, so far was I from meditating to injure, that my whole purpose was to protect from injury the object of my tender attachment—It was, to me, a most flattering and soothing idea, that I was deputed to watch over this angelic woman, with the fond affection of a guardian spirit—I felt myself ennobled by the charge, and would not have exchanged the sublime pleasure it afforded me, for any less elevated indulgence that

the epicurean doctrine might offer.—I know, that with all your good sense, and all your right notions of friendship, you have no more comprehension of this sort of attachment than of the Rosicrucian mystery—Not much more, perhaps, than Montfleuri, who ridicules my platonism as a degree of visionary insanity, and believes nothing about it—Not much more, that my worthy uncle, the Major, who has as little idea of true disinterested love, as he has of patriotism or charity, or rectitude, or of restraining, when it comes in his way, from a good dinner.

As it was less easy to be concealed at Meudon than at Paris; and as I languished for the pleasure of gazing, unperceived, on that lovely countenance, I was compelled to take a disguise; the means of doing so were offered me by the vicinity of the convent of Capuchins—I need not relate the manner in which; by the help of Warham, I contrived this; it is enough that I succeeded without being at all suspected,

and

and was frequently within a few paces of Geraldine and her children—Every hour encreasing my attachment to her, for I every hour saw new occasion to admire the sweetness of her temper, her tender maternal attention—her mild fortitude, and the graces which set off these virtues.—Oh! Bethel! this woman, whose conduct is so irreproachable, while united to such a man as Verney, what would she have been if given to one who felt her value, and endeavoured to deserve her?—If, contending almost ever since her marriage with calamity and regret, she has not only shewn the noblest qualities of the heart, but has cultivated her understanding, and added every ornament to every virtue; what would she have been if the watchful tenderness of unabated love had shielded her from all inconvenience and evil, and left to her only the practice of the milder virtues, and the cultivation of ornamental talents?—But whither am I wandering—in what dreams am I indulging myself?—
dreams

dreams of what *might have been*; as if to embitter the sad reflection of *what is*; or to irritate the terror with which my soul recoils from the picture of *what may be*.

Yes! my dear friend, at the moment I am writing, and with apparent composure, this long narrative, I know not whether the most miserable destiny is not hanging over *me*; and, at all events, I am certain, that Geraldine must go through as much and as painful suffering as can be felt by innocence—Guilt and self-reproach can alone inflict incurable anguish.

I will, however, since this state of suspense may, perhaps, last much longer, endeavour to command myself enough to continue my narrative.

While I continued at Meudon, I every day, and sometimes every hour of the day, indulged myself with the sight of Geraldine—I saw her morning walks, in pensive meditation, and heard the sigh which anxiety drew from her bosom as she turned her lovely eyes to heaven, to im-
plore

plore its protection for her children; I watched her as she sought the shade at noon, when she sometimes tried to beguile her pain, by playing with them on the grass, or by contemplating the wonderful structure of the leaves and flowers, which they gathered and brought to her—Sometimes I saw her attempt to read, but her thoughts seemed to wander from her book, and her own situation was too uneasy and uncertain to allow her to attend to the fictitious distress of novels, or moralize on the real miseries represented by history—Her evening walk was always towards the upper gardens, from whence she descended a long flight of steps adjoining the chapel of the old palace, which led to the lower; and there, after her children were gone to their repose, I have seen her sit whole hours; sometimes employed with her pencil, and sometimes apparently absorbed in thought—and failing to recollect it was necessary to return home, till reminded

reminded of it by the surrounding darknesses.

Oh! what would I not then have given to have dared to approach her? what, to have been sure, that one of those anxious thoughts which crowded on her mind, was fraught with good wishes and good will towards me?—yet, though in these respects I could not be satisfied—indeed, Bethel, I enjoyed, during this period, comparative happiness—I saw her in present safety, and every hour rendered less, the probability of her husband's schemes being carried into effect; as the return of his friends to their former oppressive power became every day less probable—I saw her health, which had been very much injured by long solicitude, now visibly amending; for though that solicitude was far from being at an end, the comparative repose she enjoyed, aided by the fine air of this country, had already a visible and happy effect on her frame—The pale rose returned to her cheeks; and her eyes, though they

were

were often filled with tears, regained their mild lustre—Those lovely arms which had lost their beautiful *embonpoint*, when I saw her at Bridgefoot, were now "*blanc & potelé*," as when they first attracted my admiration—But plain prose cannot do justice to her personal beauty; and, I am afraid, if I run into poetry, you will find (if you have not found it already) new cause to doubt of, and to ridicule my professions of platonism.

Yet, very certain it is, that if I could have seen her perfectly freed from all her apprehensions of future difficulties—if I might have been allowed to converse with her a few hours every day—have been admitted to a place in her heart, as her friend and her brother, I should have been well content, nor ever have wished (at the expence of disturbing her tranquillity) for any other happiness the world could afford—So, entirely, do I subscribe to the opinion of a French moralist, who says,

"Etre

“Etre avec des gens qu'on aime, cela fuffit ; rêver, leur parler, ne leur parler point ; penser à eux, penser à des choses plus indifferent, mais auprès d'eux ; tout est egal.*”

An event, however, happened, that I had long expected, and which relieved my mind from a weight of anxiety and pain—It was nothing that related to Geraldine ; but it made my presence at Paris necessary for some hours—I went thither, therefore, on the noon of Wednesday ; and on my return, on the following morning, about twelve o'clock, I repaired, still as a capuchin, (though I now intended, in a few days, to throw off my disguise) to the spot where, at that hour of the day, I usually saw Geraldine with her children—Alas ! there was now no Geraldine !—But after waiting about a quarter of an hour near the spot, I saw the children approach with

* La Bruyere.

their

their maid, and perceived that the poor girl was in an agony of tears, sobbing audibly as she vainly attempted to pacify and appease the dear boy, who was eagerly insisting on being suffered to go to his mamma.

The idea that illness or accident had befallen Geraldine, dissipated, in a moment, all my resolutions of precaution and concealment; without even attempting to disguise my voice, or conceal my features, I spoke hastily to Peggy—"Good God," said I, "what is the matter, and where is your mistress?"

The sudden sight of me, in such a place, and in such a dress, added to the terror and confusion of the poor girl, whom I was obliged to support to a seat, where she fell into a sort of fit; and I never felt, I think, more awkwardly and uneasily situated than I did, for some moments, while I endeavored to reason her into some degree of recollection, and to soothe the eldest boy, who continued to entreat her to take him to his mother;

mother; and who, at first, shrunk from my melancholy and uncouth appearance—At length I learned, to my inexpressible terror, that at two o'clock, the day before, an express had been sent to Geraldine by Mr. Bergasse, with a letter, which he had received from the Hotel de Romagnecourt; it was from Verney, and related, that having, with a party of his friends, joined the aristocratic side in the disputes existing at Avignon, he had been wounded in a skirmish, where many of his friends were killed—that he lay at a miserable *auberge*, at the village of Salon, near two leagues beyond Avignon, whither he had, with difficulty, escaped—that de Romagnecourt and Boisbelle had fled farther, and were gone he knew not whither—and that thus deserted, in a place where there was no medical assistance, he entreated her to send him money, and some friend, who might receive his last directions in regard to his family—He added—"I should ask you to come yourself, if I did not feel

conscious that I have not deserved your kind attention; otherwise, it would be the only consolation I could receive in dying; or, if I live, you would be entitled to my everlasting gratitude."

It was this sentence which determined Geraldine to set out immediately—listening to nothing but what she believed to be the voice of duty, she gave herself no time to reflect on danger which affected only herself; and, without any other preparation than putting up a small quantity of linen, giving orders about her children, and providing for their subsistence during her absence, she set out for Paris; and, I believe, I related to you, in my first hurried letter, her departure from thence, in despite of the remonstrances and entreaties of Bergasse, who, seeing her so determined, could do no more than facilitate and render easy the journey she was resolved to undertake.

Geraldine, unattended, even by a servant, had been gone near twenty hours,

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when

when I began my journey—Every body at Paris told me, that the Southern Provinces were infested by associations of aristocrats; who, encouraged by the hopes of being speedily restored to their former situation, by the armies which were assembling under the exiled princes, had, *en attendant mieux*, armed those who were content still to remain in vassalage, and had fortified their castles, from whence they sent out parties to attack and destroy all whose religious or political creed differed from their own; and that it was supposed to be under the auspices of these great men, that many parties of banditti ravaged the provinces, carrying with them terror and devastation; miseries which were often imputed to those who had armed only in defence of their families and their freedom. Oh! Bethel!—judge what cruel apprehensions these accounts raised for the safety of Geraldine—They were, indeed, such as drove me almost to distraction; but I, though I almost despaired of overtaking and
saving

saving her from the horrors into which she had rushed from a mistaken principle of duty; the desire of being serviceable to her was the only sentiment I could attend to; and I therefore added to my own English servants, a Swiss, who was recommended to me for his honesty and resolution, and a Frenchman, who had formerly served me as *valet de place*, and of whom I had a very good opinion—These four men were completely armed, as I was myself, with two brace of pistols each, and a *couteau de chasse*; and as I surveyed my little troop, I thought, that if we could once overtake Geraldine, we should be able, at least, to convey her in safety to the place of her destination.

Just as I was on the point of departure by the straight road to Lyons, Bergasse recollected, that Verney had directed his wife, in case either she or any friend came to him, that they might travel through Clermont, instead of the usual route, because, if he was able to be removed, he

hoped he might reach the *chateau* d'Hauteville, in Auvergne, where a great number of his friends had agreed, by the consent of the Count, to a rendezvous—In this case, a letter was to be left at the post-house at Clermont, to inform her of his being at Hauteville, though this information served only to strengthen my prepossession that this was altogether an infamous and treacherous contrivance to put Geraldine into the power of the Duc de Romagnecourt, I determined, at all events, to pursue this road.—At the *chateau* d'Hauteville, I thought I should, at least, have some little interest on the strength of my friendship with Montfleuri; and, upon the whole, I considered this rather as a circumstance in my favor than otherwise; for though it did not make me less apprehensive of the danger Geraldine might incur, it seemed to lend probability to my hopes of being a protection to her.

I find she has herself, since the present suspense, dreadful as it is, has given her

leave

leave to look back on the past ; related to her sister the circumstances of her journey ; and as Fanny will send you that letter ; and I had rather you would learn what passed from any hand than from mine ; I will only add to this great packet, an assurance, that if it leaves you, my friend, in doubt, as to my fate, and that of Geraldine ; that uncertainty must, in a very few days, a very few hours, be terminated ; and that exquisite happiness, or irretrievable misery, must be the decided lot of

Your's, ever faithfully,

LIONEL DESMOND.

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LET

LETTER XXIII.

TO MISS WAVERLY.

O&. 29, 1791.

WHAT scenes, my dear sister, have passed since I wrote to you last!—In what a scene do I now write!—When I look back upon the past, or consider the present, I sometimes wonder to find myself living, oftener doubt my existence!—and ask, whether the sufferings I have lately experienced, are not the hideous paintings of disease on the disordered brain of a wretch in a fever?—I am now, however, for the first time since I left Meudon, collected enough to attempt giving you an account of all that has befallen me.

Perhaps I was rash in plunging into danger, which, before my departure from Paris, Monsieur Bergasse forcibly represented to me—I hardly dare investigate the
real

real motive of this—for were I to examine too narrowly my own heart, I might, perhaps, find that right actions do sometimes arise from wrong feelings.—Had I loved Mr. Verney, as the possessor of my first affections—as the father of my children—in short, as almost any other man might have been beloved, I should not, perhaps, have felt so very strongly the impulse of duty *only*, and should not have been urged, by its rigid laws, to incur dangers, against which, the service of pure affection, though the strongest of all motives, could hardly fortify the heart.

Being now, however, but too sensible, that whatever share of tenderness my young heart once gave him, he had long since thrown away; and that duty alone bound me to him, I determined to fulfil what seemed to be my destiny—to be a complete martyr to that duty, and to follow whithersoever it led.

A wretch, who is compelled to tremble on the brink of a precipice, has often

been known to throw himself headlong from it, and rush to death rather than endure the dread of it—This sort of sensation was, I think, what I felt; and as to my powers of endurance, I was like a victim, whose limbs being broken on the wheel, is, awhile, released from it, that he may acquire strength to bear accumulated tortures—The short respite I had felt at Meudon, after all my apprehensions on setting out for Paris, had just this effect—my spirits had acquired energy enough to enable me to suffer, without sinking entirely under them, the horrors that overtook me.

Hardly knowing what I did, and impressed only with the predominant idea, that I ought, at all hazards, to attend my husband, that I might contribute to his recovery, or receive his dying injunctions, I left Paris, by the road he had directed, without even a servant, and taking with me only a small packet of linen, and money enough for my journey—I travelled in

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a state of mind, I cannot describe; during the first day, and would have continued to pursue my route during the following night, if my desolate and helpless appearance had not encouraged the resistance of the people at the post-houses and the postillions—I had no means of enforcing my wishes; and was under the necessity of submitting to remain in a miserable post-house, at a village called La Briare, where I arrived at night-fall—There were, however, women in the house of decent appearance; they seemed desirous of contributing, as well as they could, to my repose—I obtained, from excessive fatigue, a few hours sleep and by day-break, the next morning, I proceeded on my way, sustained by a sort of desperate resolution which I had never before felt.

The second and third day passed nearly as the first—I travelled as far as I could find people willing to convey me, and then, in any house that would give me a shelter, lay down in my cloaths.

On the fourth, they told me I was in Auvergne; and, towards evening, I stopped at a solitary post-house, situated on the edge of an extensive forest, and in a country, where, hardly any traces of civilization appeared—The people who came out, upon my asking for horses, had a wild and savage appearance—A tall, swarthy, meagre figure, presented himself at the door of my carriage, and told me he was the post-master—I begged of him to let me have horses to go on towards Clermont—he told me he had none—that a company of banditti, whom, in the present state of the police, justice had not been able to disperse, had been, for many days, ravaging the country, and had taken from him all his horses—Then it was that, for the first time during this melancholy journey, I was sensible of fear—I looked round me, and saw only faces which seemed to me to belong to the banditti the man described; and his own had, beyond any I ever saw, the terrific look which

Salvator

Salvator gives to his assassins—The country around was more dreary than the wildest heath in England—It was a wide uncultivated plain, surrounded with woods, which seemed to be endless—I knew not, whether to prefer venturing into them, or remain at the gloomy and miserable habitation before me.—Any debate however, on this point, was soon put an end to, by the declaration of the postillion who had brought me hither, that he could go no farther.

I now certainly felt, in all its force, the horrors of my situation, and fancy even augmented them—There was, I thought, a sort of savage pleasure on the countenance of the man who called himself the post-master, as he opened the door of the chaise—I entered trembling, and hardly able to support myself, into a kind of kitchen, which seemed to serve for every purpose, to the groupe of hideous figures that were assembled in it—If I had before shuddered, at the looks of the men,

who surrounded my chaise, those of three women, who now crowded about me, gave me infinitely more alarm; I know not how, under the immediate impression, I felt, I was able to make such observations; but the elder of them struck me, as being an exact representation of Horace's Canidia — The two others were younger, and more robust, equally hideous however, and more masculine — They spoke to each other, as they examined my dress, in a language of which I understood only a few words, repeating often the word, *Anglaise!* with an air of derision. — A fire of vine stalks and turf was made in the chimney of the room, which was floored only with earth, or rather with mud — and never will the circle, that gathered round it, be erased from my recollection — The blaze of the fire, threw catching lights upon their harsh features; and, as all their eyes were fixed on me, I fancied myself surrounded by dæmons — My imagination flew back to my children;

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it represented my lovely cherubs calmly sleeping, unconscious of the situation of their unhappy mother; who was now, I thought, torn from them for ever—Their poor father too, occurred to me—dying, perhaps, in a place equally wretched; among people equally savage.—That I had put myself into the present danger from a motive of duty to him, was the only consideration that supported me—What would have been my reflections if the pursuit of any guilty attachment had led me hither?

Though I did not entirely understand the *patois* in which these rude people conversed, I yet heard enough to make me comprehend they were waiting for somebody; they looked frequently at me, and repeated, “*cette Anglaise*,” and “*nos Messieurs*.”—The women sometimes laughed immoderately, and sometimes one of them went to the door, as if to look for the arrival of the people they expected—this scene lasted above an hour.—One of the women
began

began to prepare supper—a coarse cloth, disgustingly dirty, was spread on a board that reached the whole length of the kitchen—The pot *au feu* was brought forward to receive a supply of leeks; a large dish of onions and garlic was heated, with something they called beef; and all this was, I learned from their conversation, for *les Messieurs*, whose arrival they awaited.

I felt myself sinking fast under the horrible apprehension, that these expected guests were the banditti of whom I had been told, and that this was an house of rendezvous.—The dreadful stories of murders and assassinations that I had heard, or read of, now crowded on my imagination—I found it would soon be impossible to support myself, and a state of insensibility, at such a period, might subject me to the most hideous insults.—I begged one of the women to give me a little wine—she brought some, which I drank; and, on her request for money, I took out a parcel

of *assignats* I had in my pocket—She immediately seized them, and carried them to one of the men, who looked at them by the fire-light, then turned towards me his hideous countenance, and grinning horribly, nodded to me, and thrust them all into his pocket.

This seemed as if it would have been the signal to plunder me, if some other project had not been in agitation—I have since been amazed how I retained my senses and recollection under such circumstances of horror! which had now, indeed, continued till my aggravated apprehensions were arisen to a height it was impossible long to endure.

But now the feet of several horses were heard upon the *pavé*—An exclamation from the people within the house—“*Eh! voila donc, nos Messieurs!*” left me no doubt that these were the troop of ruffians who scoured the country for prey—They seemed, however, to be in contention, for voices were heard very loud, and three pistols went
off

off very quickly.—My ears were then invaded by dreadful groans, as of a person killed; groans so loud, that they were distinguishable amidst the clamour of several harsh voices, which was now increased by the hallooing of the men, and the shrieks of two of the women who had gone out from the hovel; where I sat in a state I have not language to describe; the beldam alone remaining with me, who fixed her terrible eyes upon me, and approached me in an attitude as if she were about to strike me, with a long knife, which she had been using over the fire.—I arose to avoid her, when a figure, covered with blood, rushed into the room, staggered towards the chimney, and fell at my feet; at the same instant, a very loud voice cried in English—"Sir! Sir! Mr. Desmond! for God sake! Mr. Desmond!"—My senses then forsook me.

When I recovered them it was yet dark; by the single candle, on a table near, I found myself on a sort of bed in a wretched room;

room; around which, as I cast my eyes, all the terrors I had passed through rushed upon my recollection.—There was a rug hung up on one side the bed, which concealed some person behind it; an impulse of fear made me put it hastily aside—and I saw, not the hag who had apparently attempted my life; not one of the ruffians from whom I had dreaded greater horrors, but Desmond himself.—“Thank God!” cried he, “she lives!”—Oh! Fanny, the sound of that voice, those words, the suddenness of beholding such a friend protecting me—Is it possible?—Ah! no, it is not; to convey, by language, any idea of my sensation at that moment—I have, indeed, no very clear recollection of them myself, for in a short time my faintness returned—I only remember that I gave both my hands into those of Desmond, who hung over me; and, telling him I was dying, recommended my children to him—bade him carry them to England, to put them under your care—blessed him for his friendship—
and

and then closed my eyes, in the persuasion that I should open them no more.

Again, however, the tender attention of this inestimable friend restored me to life; when I became sensible the second time, he was on the other side of the bed, bathing my temples with brandy, and chaffing my hands; behind him stood an Englishman, whom I knew to be his servant, and whose appearance, the moment I recovered myself enough to remark it, struck me with new fear—His cheek was cut across, and his cloaths stained with blood; he held under one arm a case of pistols, and a hanger was slung to the wrist of the other. On a table, close to the head of the bed, lay another case of pistols, and Desmond had put a broad sword on the bed.—I turned my enquiring looks on him—he did not seem to be wounded, but his whole appearance indicated that something very extraordinary had happened—he was pale, his eyes were swollen as with extreme fatigue; and, I observed, that he cast them
eagerly

eagerly towards the door of the room, and listened anxiously to every noise.

When he saw me again sensible, he besought me to swallow some wine which he offered me—I obeyed in silence; for I was not, at that moment, able to speak.—I found, however, my strength and recollection returning; and, at length I asked him the meaning of all I saw.

“Will you, dearest Mrs. Verney?” said he, “will you only oblige me so far as not to ask till you are in a place of safety?”—

“Am I not safe,” cried I, “any where with you?”—“You should be,” answered he, “if my arm, or those of my servants could serve you—if we were sure of being able to protect you against numbers, our lives would be held well sacrificed in the attempt: but the men with whom we engaged last night at the door of this cottage, little knowing the dear invaluable life it contained, are free-booters; men, who having been armed by the resisting aristocracy against the *liberties* of the country,

country, have thrown off their allegiance to their employers, and now prey upon its *property*.—In reaching this post-house we met a party of eight of them, who immediately attacked us; we disarmed and wounded two—I hope not to death—The other six, after a faint attempt to revenge their comrades, in which I am afraid a third was desperately wounded, fled to the woods; and we easily repelled the endeavours of the people here, who are their associates, to assist them—The sudden sight of you, to all appearance dead, put every thing out of my head but the necessity of securing these people; which, with my small party, I could not so effectually do, but that one of the men is escaped, who, together with the wretches who attacked us, will most certainly return hither; and though in such a cause it is, I think, no boast to say, I feel myself an host; yet I own I dread worse, ten thousand times worse than death, the consequences to you,

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you, if superior numbers should render my endeavours to guard you fruitless."

Oh! Fanny! what images of distracting terror did this set before me?—The most dreadful of them was, that of Desmond sacrificing his life to save me.—I was no longer sensible of that weakness which, a moment before, lay heavy on me like the hand of death; but starting up I exclaimed—"Oh! Desmond! for God's sake let us go! I am able to go in any manner, indeed I am—only do not leave me, and my strength will not fail me, whatever it may be necessary for me to undertake."

"Do you then think," said he, "you could be removed in the chaise?"—I hurried from the bed, protesting I could.—He then told me he had three servants below—one of whom, on his calling aloud, came up—He bade him instantly harness to the chaise whatever horses he could find—He did so; and, in a few moments I was, I know not how, seated in it with

Desmond;

Desmond; who, I believe had, with the aid of one of his servants, lifted me down the ladder which led to the lower room; for I recollect, that on attempting to descend, my strength and spirits again wholly failed me.

One of Desmond's servants, a Swiss, was mounted as postillion; two English and a French servant rode by its side; and Desmond himself was in the chaise, only preventing my falling to the bottom by supporting me in his arms.—With my returning senses, however, the consciousness returned of the exertion I ought to make, that so much friendship might not be rendered abortive; and that I might not, by being needlessly burthened to him, endanger his life—I struggled then against the sick languor which had been occasioned by the dreadful scene I had passed—and again enquired, “to what fortunate circumstance I owed the protection he had afforded me.”

“Stay,”

“ Stay,” answered he, “ my dear friend, stay till you see whether that protection has been effectual!—Let it not now dwell upon your spirits, when they may be required for greater exertions.”—
 “ You apprehend danger then ?” enquired I.—“ Less and less,” replied he, “ every step we advance ; but still, perhaps, there is some—My servants, however, are well armed and resolute, and if the worst should happen”—

I dared not ask what—what if the worst should happen ?—I cast my eyes around—the dawn just afforded light enough to shew, that we were travelling across an extensive plain, towards the woods that on all sides surrounded it—Into these woods we entered—Desmond looking anxiously from the windows, and directing the driver which road to take—“ .Whither do we go ?” said I, “ and is there not danger of meeting these dreadful men again ?”—

“ There certainly is,” answered he—
 “ but the danger would have been greater
 to

to have remained where we were—It is now possible we may escape them, and reach the little village of Aiqueperce, which I know is within a league of these woods, and not above six from the château d'Hauteville.

“It is thither,” said I, “that Mr. Verney thought it possible he might be well enough to remove—”

“And yet,” interrupted Desmond, “it is a very long journey from the neighbourhood of Avignon, where his letter is dated, to the house of Monsieur D'Hauteville.”

I cannot, my Fanny, relate all the conversation which was held by fits and starts—Desmond rather declining it, and trying rather to soothe my enquiries, than to satisfy them—While the more I reflected on his arrival at such a place, and at such a time, the more wonderful appeared the intervention of Providence in my favour.

I saw that Desmond had some strange suspicions on his mind, which were raised

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by the directions I had received from Mr. Verney, to take such, and so dangerous a circuit to reach Avignon, when the most obvious way was by Lyons—and I felt, too cruelly felt, that Mr. Verney's former conduct too well justified those suspicions.—Present terror, in some measure, deprived me of reflection, or it must have struck me as strange, that if Desmond apprehended any danger at Hauteville, he should rather bend his course thither than towards Clermont, which he told me was a large town, not much farther distant.

We travelled on through the woods for some miles; it was one of those cold, damp, gloomy mornings, which impresses a dreary idea that the sun has forsaken the world.—The wind sighed hollow among the half stripped trees; and the leaves slowly fell from the boughs, heavy with rain.—The road, rough, and hardly passable, seemed leading us to the dark abode of desolation and despair; yet, when I

saw, as I reclined my head against the side of the chaise, that Desmond was with me—as I found his arm sometimes supporting me—and heard his voice speaking of hope and comfort, I found that all local evils were unheeded; and that nothing had power to produce again the stupor from which I had so lately recovered, but the dread of seeing his life in danger.—My sister! if such a sentiment should be deemed culpable in a married woman, let the circumstances, under which it was felt, be at least considered before she is condemned.

At last we emerged from the fearful solitude, and approached a lone village, which Desmond believed to be Aigueperce; it was not that, however, but another, a league from it—But, as the people seemed inoffensive and hospitable, he determined to stop there for such refreshment as it afforded—He would have persuaded me to have gone to bed for some hours, assuring me that he would become

a sentinel without the door of my room, to guard against every alarm—but, besides that, I should have found it impossible to obtain any repose, I thought it better not to lose a moment in pursuing our journey, and getting as far as possible from the part of the country which was described as being infested with banditti—We were yet above seven leagues from Hauteville; the greater part of our route lay, according to the account of the villagers, through a country as dreary in itself, and as dangerous from the parties of unlicensed freebooters that frequented it, as that we had already passed.—After a slight refreshment, therefore, we hastened on; meeting, indeed, with no impediments but those of dreadful roads.—The horses were quite tired; and though we again stopped to give them food and rest for above two hours, they were so exhausted, that it was with the utmost difficulty, and only in a foot pace, that they crossed the great and wild plain which, as Desmond told me,

lay before the avenue to the castle of Hauteville ; but it was now dark, and I could discern nothing—My spirits were quite worn out, and my heart sunk in utter despondence ; never, indeed, could be imagined a situation so strange as mine.—I was going, I hardly knew with what hope, to a place where Desmond, while he conducted me thither, seemed to apprehend that dangers and distresses, of which, however, he evaded explaining the nature, awaited me ; but he agreed with me in thinking, that as I had there a probability of being informed of the situation of Mr. Verney, I acted right in going—He sighed deeply as he assented to my reasons, and generally concluded the short conversations, which were frequently renewed on this subject, with saying—“ At least, while you will allow me the honour of remaining with you, I will defend you with my life.”

At length a distant and faint light, glimmering through the trees, told us we
were

were very near the castle; as we approached it the light disappeared—and the night was so dark, that the Swiss who drove us, could no longer discern whither he was going.—On a sudden, one of the three horses fell into what appeared to be a deep *fossé*; the harness of ropes fortunately gave way, or the chaise must have been dragged after him—the other horses, however, though down, were disengaged from this, by the breaking of the tackle; and Desmond, leaping from the chaise, snatched me out—and having seen me safe on the ground, advanced with the other three men to the assistance of the postilion.

I was unable to stand—I staggered to a tree against which I leaned, so overcome with fatigue and terror, that I feared my senses would again forsake me.—Desmond having disengaged the remaining horses from the chaise, and sent the French servant forward to try to obtain a light, that the other poor animal might be relieved, came

to me ; but he was obliged to find me by my voice, for it was impossible to see even the nearest objects.—“ Good God ! how cold you are—how you tremble !” cried he, as he took my hand—“ are you able, no surely you are not, to walk forward ?—and yet, perhaps, if you are, it will be unsafe to venture.—Since I was here last, some rude kind of fortification seems to have been made—There was no ditch around the castle before—and I know no longer how to guide you safely”—I was unable to answer him—He was terrified at my silence ; and supposing me again in the situation in which he had so lately seen me, he called aloud for lights and for assistance.—One of the servants came up to him ; two of the others were by this time gone to endeavour to obtain admittance into the castle, and the fourth remained with the horses.

The anguish that Desmond seemed to feel for me, roused me from the state into which I had fallen—I assured him I

was

was able to walk on ; and he supported me, as step by step, his servant Warham going first ; we endeavoured to find, or rather to feel our way towards the house.

Every way, however, in front, where Desmond said there was formerly only a rail, a deep *fossé* intercepted our passage.—The heavy clouds which had occasioned darkness so total, were now driven away by the sudden rising of the wind ; and we could just discern the *château* before us—~~an~~ attempt to cross the ditch in some other place by going round it.

When I reflected whither I was going, and to what purpose Desmond was, on my account, incurring so much fatigue and so much hazard, I cannot describe the emotions that arose in my mind ; nor do I know how I found strength to traverse this melancholy place, still finding it inaccessible.—Desmond now hallooed in hopes his own servants would hear and answer him ; after near a quarter of an hour, one of them came towards us, but

still on the other side of the *fossé*; he said that he had fallen into it in endeavouring to find his way to the house, and that it was half full of water, but that he had scrambled up on the other side, and found one of the entrances to the castle, where he had knocked and called in vain for some time; that he had then attempted to force the door, which seemed, by some accident, to be incompletely fastened; that he had entered a great hall where the embers were yet a light on the hearth, but that he could make no one hear, and was afraid of going any farther.

Desmond now enquired where he could pass the *fossé*, and bade his servant walk round it, as there must somewhere be a bridge—Within a few paces a slight draw-bridge was found, which the man easily let down—We passed it; and he led us to the door by which he had himself entered.

Never was so dismal a place so long and eagerly sought for.—The faint embers served just to shew that it was a large and high

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high vaulted room; but as my cloaths were wet through, for it had rained, at intervals, the whole evening, Desmond was so glad to find a fire, that he seemed, in his eagerness for my immediate relief, regardless of all that did not tend to that object.—By this time the English groom, who had also been sent to the *chateau*, had found the same door; and after having helped to make up the fire, and light a candle, he went out with Warham, to assist the Swiss, who remained with the horses, and to shew him the way over the draw-bridge; the Frenchman only remaining with us.

I now saw, in the countenance of Desmond, an expression of doubt and uneasiness, which alarmed me more than any fears he could openly have expressed.—I endeavored first to convince him that I was less incommoded by my wet cloaths than he seemed to apprehend; and then to enquire what he thought of our situation.—“The people you expected to find,” said

I, "the people whom my letter gave me reason to suppose might be here, are certainly not here"—"God knows," replied he, "perhaps these men have fallen into the snare they have laid for others—The desperados, whom they have armed against their country, have, perhaps, turned those arms against themselves—The ruffians have, possibly, driven out the owner of this castle, or his friends, for I do not believe he has been lately here himself; and it may be in possession of some such wretches as those we have escaped from—It is better, however, to know at once."

"You will not leave me?" said I, terrified at the idea of his going on this search—"Never," replied he, "but with my life; but, when the other men arrive, we will, some of us, go round the rooms of the castle—That there are inhabitants, the light we saw in the windows, and unextinguished embers of fire, ascertains; that there has existed some necessity for defence, the works around the house, which

were

were certainly not here before, leaves no manner of doubt. What Mr. Verney said to you, is evidence enough that here the aristocratic party of these provinces had a rendezvous; yet, if it were still assembled here, it is improbable the members of it should be so little on their guard, or that the noise we have made should not have alarmed them."

From this conversation I discovered, that Desmond apprehended the place we were in, was in the possession of ruffians and banditti—a circumstance infinitely more terrific than any other that could be imagined—I observed that he listened to every noise—kept his pistols in his hand, and enquired solicitously of the French servant whether his fire-arms were properly charged?—I do not believe that a quarter of an hour was ever passed in a more uneasy state; for so long it was before the other three men came to us—When they arrived, Desmond questioned them whether they had seen any signs of inhabitants while

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they

they remained within view of the whole front of the castle—they answered none.

Desmond then told them, he wished to enquire, by some persons going round the rooms, whether there were any women who could prepare a bed for me; but none of them knew the way—and none of them seemed very desirous of undertaking the exploit without him—while I was as resolutely determined not to remain behind, if he went—On surveying the room where we were, it appeared to be a sort of servants hall—Every thing in it was dirty and in disorder—The piece of candle which one of the men had found, was nearly extinguished, and we saw no means of renewing the light when it was burnt out—My fears were so much greater of the people that Desmond seemed to apprehend were within the house, than of any fatigue I could encounter without it, that I could, most willingly, have left it without any farther enquiry; but, besides that, the horses were incapable of going farther, he, probably, knew that our escape was
impos-

impossible—for that, if such were the inhabitants of the *chateau* d'Hauteville, detached parties of them were in the woods, with whom we should infallibly meet.—I saw, with dreadful alarm, the debate he held with himself, what it would be best to do—At length he determined to see who was in the house; and, securing the door by which we had entered, he determined that we should all go on this enquiry.

He directed Warham to go first with the candle—I trembled like an aspin leaf, as he took my arm within his, to lead me along—the other three servants followed—“Be not so alarmed,” said he, as we crossed a long stone passage, “there are five of us; and, I think, any nearly equal number must be fortunate if they gain any advantage.”—We now entered a dark and gothic hall—Warham stumbled over something, he stooped and took it up; it was one of those caps to travel in of a night, used sometimes in England, but oftener in France; a bullet had pierced it, and it
was

was on one side covered with blood—Warham, with a countenance where terror was strongly marked, shewed it to his master—I felt that he grasped my arm closer within his, but betrayed no other signs of fear, and calmly bade Warham go on.

We ascended the stairs, and came to a corridor; in one of the rooms opening into it, Desmond told me he had formerly slept—The corridor was long, and several rooms adjoined to it—Desmond thought he heard a sound—he bade us listen!—What a pause of horror!—We distinctly heard the loud breathing of some person or persons—“We will know,” said Desmond, “at all events, who they are.”

You know that, in France, it is impossible to open a door, from without, but with the key—Desmond, therefore, did not hesitate, having once taken his resolution, but, with a violent blow against the door, he aroused the person who slept in the room—A loud, masculine voice enquired what he wanted, and he bade him instantly open the door,

the

I thrunk back with dread—for, in a moment, a hideous figure appeared at it, who asked, why such haste, and whether they had brought any prisoners?—This sufficiently convinced me that Desmond's conjectures were true; and I know not how I sustained my trembling limbs, while Desmond, without giving the man time for recollection, disengaged himself from me, and sprung upon him like a lion—"Villain!" said he, "what prisoners!—Your life is at my mercy—Tell me instantly—Where is the Count d'Hauteville? and in whose possession is his house?"

The man appeared to me to be twice as tall and athletic as Desmond; but guilt and fear are inseparable—He either was incapable of making, or feared to make any resistance, but called for mercy with the most abject supplications—Desmond told him it would be granted, on condition of his immediately informing him by what authority he was in that house—who was there with him—and to whom he belonged.

The

The man said that he was one of a troop armed for the defence of the castle, by the order of the Count d'Hauteville, who was, himself, gone to Italy—That other noblemen, friends to the cause, had fortified it against the municipal guard, to whom they were determined never to submit—That these noblemen had, within a few days, left the place; and that the vassals they had left behind, had continued, by their orders, in the castle, from whence they had, occasionally, made excursions against the national guard.

“And against travellers,” said Desmond vehemently, interrupting him, “whom you have robbed and murdered—Is it not so?”

The man denied their having murdered any one, but owned, that they thought themselves justified in plundering the partizans of democracy, who were endeavoring to plunder the noble persons, by whom they were employed and paid.—The eyes of Desmond flashed fire at this information —“Tell me instantly,” cried he, “what number of men there is in the house?”—

“Only myself,” answered he, “and one more, with some women that belong to us—The rest of our gentlemen are out, and when you came, I believed it to be them.”—

“And how many are there of these *gentlemen* out marauding.”—“There are eight.”

Desmond, with admirable presence of mind, sent two of the men to secure the companion to this worthy person, who was, he said, in the next room.—Both these ruffians had been so intoxicated the preceding evening, that they were, perhaps, incapable of resistance.—They made none—Desmond’s servants conveyed them to a room in the most ancient part of the castle, which was, when the feudal system was in all its force, a place of confinement for the wretched vassals, over whom those barbarous customs gave the *seigneur*, the power of life and death—It was still strongly secured; for the privilege, though not so often exerted, had never been given up—While these men were securing in one part of this building, Desmond, with his trembling companion still hanging
on

on his arm, went with the other men and drew up the bridge, thus preventing the entrance of the eight ruffians, who it was likely would immediately return.—Four women were now assembled in extreme terror—Desmond assured them that he waged no war against them, but that he must insist upon their not attempting to give any intelligence to the persons without, and upon their furnishing me with assistance and refreshment.

He then, as we seemed to be now in a tolerable state of security, would have had me take some repose, for he saw that I was hardly able to support myself; this, however, I refused; for I knew that to attempt sleeping in such circumstances would be to no purpose.—As one of his servants had found his way across the *fossé*, of the depth of which he was ignorant, the men who were out for the purposes of robbery, were certainly able to cross it.—I saw still the possibility, nay the probability of danger to him, and of such scenes as my soul sick-

ened

ened at; the cap which Warham had picked up now lay on a great table in the room to which we had returned—and the idea that the murdered body of some unhappy person to whom it belonged, might be concealed in the house, made me shudder as I surveyed it.—Suddenly the supposition that it was, perhaps, Verney himself, occurred to me.—Gracious heaven! what horror accompanied that thought!—Involuntarily I caught the hand of Desmond, who sat anxiously watching my countenance—He enquired eagerly what was the matter.—“ Oh! Desmond!” said I, hardly, indeed, conscious of what I said—“ Verney is here, I am persuaded he is; he came hither by appointment of his perfidious friends—they were called away before his arrival, and these their retainers have destroyed him.”

He endeavoured to argue me out of a supposition which he saw shook my whole frame.—“ If you have any impression of this sort,” said he, “ I will interrogate the men

men below; I will myself search the whole house."—"Oh! no, no," replied I—"send your servant to do this, but for heaven's sake do not yourself leave me!"

Warham was then sent with the Swiss round the house; there was no appearance of any person concealed in it, either dead or alive.—The men who were in confinement below, protested that the cap belonged to one of their own people, who had been fired at in retreating before a party of the national horse, and wounded in the cheek.—On this assurance I became easier; but as I still persisted in refusing to go to any bed above stairs, Desmond desired the women to bring down one and lay on the floor of the room where we were; they did so, and he prevailed upon me to lie down, the mere change of posture after so many hours of fatigue and terror, was extremely refreshing.—He had before made me eat of some provisions, the women produced, and drink some warm wine.—He now assured me his men were so placed
that

that the people from whom we apprehended danger could not surprise us.—

“We are,” said he, “five men, resolute and well armed; we have heaven on our side; we have your safety to contend for—and can you imagine that we should be easily conquered?”

“Oh! no,” replied I, “I do not imagine it; but the terror of such a scene!—to shed blood even of the mis-guided wretches whom we fear is so horrible!—Your danger—danger for me too!”—Tears, the first I had been able to shed for many days, now burst from my eyes; I found myself greatly relieved by them—and since I saw how much he wished me to attempt it, I endeavoured, while he sat by me, to rest.—I even fell into a kind of half slumber, from which I started in terror, fancying I heard fire-arms, and saw the horrid visages of the ruffians, but I found Desmond only by me, assuring me that all was perfectly safe and quiet, and I sunk once more into something like sleep—and when I again recovered

recovered my recollection, it was morning—Never was the light of day more welcome—for it shewed me Desmond, my generous protector in safety; and I saw his countenance lighten with friendly pleasure, when he found me so much restored.—The women, by this time convinced that we meant nothing hostile to them, or even to the men who had been in possession of the house, if we were not molested, were now in hopes that we should quietly depart; they were assiduous, therefore, in assisting me.—My cloaths, about which I had never thought, were enquired for in the chaise, and the small portmanteau I had was produced untouched—Desmond waited without the door, while I, with the assistance of the women, changed my cloaths—A very few moments, you may believe, sufficed me; for I found he was now impatient to pursue the plan which he had settled for me, which was to go on, notwithstanding all passed dangers, to the village where Verney had informed

me

he was, though this journey was above seventy leagues.—Every consideration of prudence and safety urged our immediate departure; the men were sufficiently refreshed, and the horses able to proceed, all but the poor animal which had fallen into the *fossé*—which was so much injured, that Desmond in mercy ordered it to be shot, and it was replaced by that which he had rode himself—and which one of the men had led.

Before seven in the morning we left this dismal abode; it was three leagues to Clermont—but we arrived there without meeting the party we had so much reason to apprehend, and I once more saw my invaluable friend in safety, after all the perils he had, on my account, hazarded; and here I agreed to take some hours repose, on condition that he would, in the mean time, attend to himself.

Early on the following morning we proceed, Desmond having hired two men with fire-arms to accompany us; which
made

made the party, he thought, so strong as to preclude any apprehensions from the troops of marauders, of which we were still told.—He went himself to the municipality at Clermont, and informed them of the situation of the *château* D'Hautville; where it is probable the two prisoners were released by their female friends, as soon as we had left them.

I will not, my dear sister, speak of any circumstances of our five days journey from Clermont to Lyons, and from thence to this place—We met with nothing worth relating after such scenes as I have just described; but the conversation I had with Desmond I will repeat as ingenuously to you, Fanny, as I repeat it involuntarily to my own heart.

Conscious as I am of the ties I am bound by, and shrinking from every idea of their violation, I will now own to you, that I have long been unable to conceal from myself, Desmond's regard for me, though he never avowed it; but, on the contrary,

contrary, has entrusted me with connexions he has formed, that were wholly incompatible with such an attachment, if he ever meant to acknowledge it—I am, however, persuaded he never did; and only the singular circumstances of my destiny have made my affected ignorance difficult, and, at length, impossible to be supported.

Fanny—though I certainly should have preferred Desmond to every other man in the world, had it been my fortune to have been acquainted with him before I became irrevocably another's—though I have received from him the most extraordinary instances of generous friendship—though he has more than once hazarded his life for me—and once—Oh! how lately, and how wonderfully, rescued me from death!—perhaps, from worse than death!—Yet, believe me, when I declare to you, that never have I, even in thought, transgressed the bounds of that duty, which, though it was imposed on me when I was not a competent judge of the engagement I en-

tered into, I feel to be equally binding, and whether my unhappy Verney lives or dies, I have the comfort of knowing, that towards him, my conduct has been irreproachable—I break my melancholy narrative to say this, because I owe it to truth, I owe it to myself—Indulge me then with yet a word on this delicate and painful subject, because I may, perhaps, speak upon it now for the last time.

I learned then, in our conversation, which became less interrupted and confused, after we left Clermont, that Desmond had never lost sight of me after I quitted England; that he had followed me to Paris, and lived in disguise at Meudon—that a circumstance of a very peculiar nature had obliged him to go to Paris the day I so suddenly received a summons to attend Mr. Verney; but that on his return, finding me gone, and learning, by Mr. Bergasse, by what route, he had pursued me, and but for an accident that happened on the road, he would have over-

taken

taken me long before that dreadful night, when he most providentially delivered me from a situation so very terrible, that, in reflecting on it, I sicken with the terror it yet impresses — When all this, my Fanny, was added to the recollection of the circumstances that happened at Bridge-foot, and some (which, though I never thought them of much consequence, it was not in my power to obliterate from my mind) that happened much earlier in our acquaintance, it would have been falsehood or affectation, had I pretended to have been ignorant that Desmond's attachment to me was not a common one ; but, while all its consequences had been to me only good ; while he preserved for me the most inviolate respect, and even promoted my executing towards Verney, what he knew to be my duty, it would have been folly and ingratitude, had I affected resentment which certainly I did not feel.

Still I am aware, that my situation was very strange and very improper, tra-

velling under the protection of a man, whom I knew felt for me a regard which I ought not to encourage, and dared not return—So much obliged to him—esteeming him beyond any other human being; every step I took, being conscious, that I owed to him that I existed; and all this, while I knew not but that my unfortunate husband was dying, or, possibly, dead—Alas! I am not a stoic—perhaps my heart is but too susceptible of gratitude and tenderness—How ill my early affections had been replaced, you know but too well!—But when my husband disdained them, they found refuge with my children and with my sister—Ah! Fanny! but for these resources, should I have been less culpable than so many other young women have been, who have been as unhappily married?—and should I now have possessed what softens the misery of my destiny?—the consciousness of not having deserved it.

Let me still possess this consoling consciousness—I will tell you, Fanny, what I

have

have done to secure its possession still—
When I found, too certainly, that Desmond had placed his whole happiness in testifying to me, by his conduct rather than his words, how much he was attached to me, I endeavored, for his sake and for my own, to convince him, that the continuance of that regard, unless it was under the regulation of reason, would be only a source of misery to us both—"If Verney should be no more," said I, "or if my earnest endeavors to contribute to his recovery, should fail—What have I either in my heart or my person, to repay such affection?—Alas! nothing!—the bloom of both are gone—*You*, Sir, are in a situation of life to expect the undivided tenderness of the most lovely and fortunate of women—I have nothing but a spirit weighed down by long anxiety—a person no longer boasting of any advantages—and a heart trembling for the fate of three little, helpless beings, who, if my fears do not exaggerate, have but little to trust to from

the wreck of their father's fortune—Let me, Desmond, as your grateful friend, point out where, without any of these drawbacks, all the little advantages you found or fancied in me, may be met with—My Fanny possesses them all; and with them an heart worthy of your's, uninjured by calamity, and untainted by sorrow.”—I will not tell you, my sister, his answer, it was expressive of the high sense Desmond has of your merit—I felt that I had acquitted myself; and while my eyes overflow with tears, I still feel it; for indeed, I think, I could die happy, if you were married to Desmond, if I knew that you united in giving to my luckless little ones that generous tenderness you are both so capable of feeling; and sometimes, in deploring together, with the soothing sympathy of kindred minds, the fate of your lost Geraldine!

This is the only plan I, at this moment, look forward to with any degree of satisfaction.—If poor Verney survives—Alas!

I would

I would very fain, but cannot flatter myself, that he will be changed—If he dies—I will retire to some cheap country with my children, and never, with my poverty and theirs, embitter the affluent and fortunate situation of Desmond.

But it is time to close my long and distressing narrative, and if I yield to these overwhelming sensations, I shall not be able!—My tears have rendered the last page illegible!

We arrived then, without any very alarming occurrence, at the village, from an *auberge* in which Verney's letter had been written—Oh! what was my breathless agitation, as I stopped in the chaise, while Desmond went to enquire for him, I cannot describe, for I could not discriminate such a combination of distracting emotions as at that moment assailed me.—In about a quarter of an hour Desmond returned, and I saw, by his countenance, that I was to expect something very dreadful—"Verney," cried I, "my husband,

is he there?—is he living?”—“He is there,” replied Desmond; “and I am shocked at myself for having supposed that he was engaged in a scheme of dishonorable treachery, while he lay in all the miseries of indigence and sickness.”—I had heard enough, and attempted to open the chaise door—“Let me go to him,” cried I, “this moment—let me go.”

“Be calm, dear Madam,” replied Desmond, “you will need all your fortitude, do not, therefore, exhaust your strength.”—“I will go, however,” exclaimed I, “nothing shall stop me—Have you seen him yourself?”—“I have.”—“And does he know that I am here?”—“He does—I told him that meeting you by a strange accident, encompassed by dangers, into which you had hurried in your anxiety to attend him, I could not quit you till I had seen you hither—He expressed, as well as he was able to express, gratitude towards me, and affection towards you.”

Oh!

Oh! my sister, judge of what I must have felt, when Desmond, after a little more preparation, led me into the room—a miserable room, where lay the father of my children, in a situation which I have not the courage minutely to describe—His associates had deserted him—his wounds, one of which was, at first, supposed to be fatal, had never been properly dressed, and *now* still (though we instantly procured better assistance) it threatens a mortification; besides this, the bones of his leg had been broken; and it was so ill set, that, on Desmond's procuring a surgeon, he was under the necessity of breaking it again—In a condition, which I will not shock you by painting distinctly, had Verney lain near five weeks, without any money, but what his arms and watch had sold for; nor any attendance, at first, but what the reluctant charity of a woman in the house had afforded him; but as his money failed, that declined also; and had it not been for one of *les sœurs de la miséricorde*, who had left her

convent, but still exercised the most noble part of her profession, he told us that he must have perished—Such was the bigotry of the people in this part of France, that this worthy woman was reproached for her humanity by the savages of the village, and told, that in trying to save the life of an *heretic*, she offended God—Though this heretic had fallen in a *defence* (from whatever motive) of the very party which so piously consigned him to death, for differing, as they supposed, in opinion—Alas! poor Verney had never any opinion at all; and now had hardly expressed, in a languid and indistinct voice, his gratitude for my attendance, before he besought me to prevent the *curé* of the parish from persecuting him hourly with his visits and exhortations; Desmond undertook to do this; but the charitable nun came every day; and, indeed, without her assistance, I should have sunk under the fatigue I have endured ever since I have been here, now four days.

I need

I need not remind you of the unhappy propensity Verney has long had to intoxication—In this habit he has indulged himself ever since he has been told that it endangers his life ; and when he is absolutely denied it, he sinks into a sullen or torpid state, and complains that I will let him die of faintness and dejection.

Oh! Fanny! when I see him suffer, and trace in his countenance, distorted, pale, and disfigured as it is, the likeness my dear boy bears to him, I forget all I have suffered—I pardon all his faults—I endeavor to apologize even for those which I fancied he intended to commit—and I pray to heaven for his life—and that he may be happy with his children—That Being alone, in whose hands are life and death, knows what is best—My only resource against the long anxiety I have gone through, against that which is to come, is in the consciousness of having done my duty—I am, in some measure, rewarded, even now, by the unwearied, the generous,

rous, and surely the disinterested conduct of Desmond, who, whatever *may* have been his motives, or his wishes, *respects that sacred duty*; and never has, since my arrival, uttered one word that could make me reproach myself with having listened to him.

Oh! what a heart is his!—how truly brave!—how manly!—how generous!—Though he has no reason to love Desmond, the tenderest friend, the most affectionate brother, could not shew more constant attention to his ease—Yesterday, overcome with the fatigue of sitting up two nights, in order that the directions of the surgeon, after the last horrible operation, might be strictly followed, I lay down, for a few hours, in my cloaths, leaving the young woman-servant of the house in the room, who promised to call me if Mr. Verney wanted any thing—Desmond was gone to the place where he lodges, to write letters to England, which he was promised an opportunity of sending that afternoon, or
this

this morning—Quite exhausted by excess of fatigue, sleep fell heavier upon me than it has done for many, many days, and when I started from my unquiet dreams which still haunted me, I found it was five o'clock.

I stepped softly towards the room where Verney lay, where I heard him talking in a loud and peremptory voice, his face was flushed even to a purple hue; and he was arguing angrily with Desmond, who hung over him, speaking soothingly to him, and entreating him to be patient!—to be pacified!—As I approached, I saw that Verney darted towards me a look of anger and reproach, while Desmond had a countenance so expressive of concern for us both!—Ah! Fanny! I found that the poor, imprudent patient had bribed, by a promise of a crown, the foolish girl that had been left with him, to bring him wine and brandy, of which he had drank so liberally, that the fever which we had, to all appearance, baffled, by compelling his abstinence, threatened

to

to return—It was, indeed, returned, and delirium succeeded; this lasted till towards morning, during all which time, Desmond sat by him, often keeping him, by force, in bed, from which he would otherwise have rushed, notwithstanding his fractured limb—The scene was often too much for me—at four o'clock he became more calm, and then Desmond prevailed upon me to leave the room, promising to remain with him.

This morning he seemed a great deal better—declares himself sensible of his folly, and assures us he will be governed—He no longer complains of pain, and, I think, I have never seen him so composed as since eight o'clock to-day; it is now ten at night—The surgeon has not been here to-day; but Verney has been so cool and rational, and slept so much, that I have been enabled to finish this letter, which I began yesterday morning.

I own I now have less apprehensions of him than I have ever had—His age—his
I naturally

naturally good constitution, are strong circumstances in his favor; and I may remark, my Fanny, I hope not unkindly remark, that Verney does not suffer, as many people do, great irritation of spirits, from excess of sensibility; and if he is tolerably free from bodily sufferings, feels no injury from the emotions of the mind.

Still his condition is, I know, precarious—Still I have much to suffer with him, and for him—I am, however, relieved, by having thus disburthened my poor heart to you!—Pray for me, my Fanny—for my children—and for the poor unfortunate sufferer their father.—Perhaps, before you receive this, for it is a long way from hence to England, he will be well—perhaps he may not need your prayers! I will contrive to write, from day to day, but now I must close my letter, as this is the only chance of sending it off for some time.

That heaven may watch over the happiness of my dear Fanny, is the warmest wish of her

GERALDINE.

LETTER XXIV.

TOMR. BETHEL.

Salon, Nov. 10, 1791.

IT is all over, my friend—Verney is gone!—The torpor and tranquillity which I described to you in my last letter,* were the beginning of a mortification, which proved fatal twenty hours afterwards—He died yesterday morning.—I will not attempt to describe the behaviour of his angelic wife, nor the comfort it is to me to reflect, on the exact and rigorous attention she has been enabled to give to this unfortunate man at the close of his life, so that her gentle heart, when the first shock has lost its force, will be restored to its tranquillity, and may taste of

* Which does not appear.

happiness

happinefs which no self-reproach will interrupt.

Peace to the afhes of poor Verney ! and may his faults be forgotten by the world, as his divine Geraldine has forgiven them.—Bethel ! his laft act of his life fhould plead his pardon for every folly with which it was ftained.—He was not, till a very few hours before his death, convinced that there was no hopes ; he then feemed to collect himfelf as if to fhew how much better he could die than he had lived.

He fuffered no pain, and was in perfect poffeffion of his fenfes ; he bade Geraldine leave him alone with me, and thus fpoke to me—

“ Desmond ! I know that your friendship for me cannot have been ftrong enough to induce you to make all the kind exertions for me, which you have done fince you have been here ; nor, indeed, to bring you hither—I have been told, by feveral people, that you have always been in love with my wife—Perfectly fecure of
her

her honour, more so than I deserved to be, not naturally of a jealous temper, and engaged in the pleasures of the world, as long as I had money to enjoy them, I never heeded this; and, if my informers meant maliciously, they lost their aim.—I am now dying, and I owe it to you, that death comes not with all the aggravated horrors of poverty and wretchedness—I know you to be a man of honour, and if Geraldine marries again, as there is certainly reason to believe she will, it is to you, rather than to any other man, that I wish to confide her and my children.”

It would be very difficult for me, Bethel, to describe my sensations while this passed—I answered, however, ingenuously and with truth—“that I certainly had always preferred Mrs. Verney to every other woman, but that my attachment had been unknown to *her*, and never would have led me to transgress the bounds of honour towards *him*; but that if she ever was at liberty, I should deem the happiness

ness of becoming her protector the first that fate could give me."

"Let me," said he, "while I am yet able, make a will in which I will give you, jointly with her, the guardianship of my children.—Poor things! I have nothing to give them; but the settlements made on my marriage has prevented my making them entirely beggars—Perhaps, my dear friend, my death may be, for them, the most fortunate circumstance that could happen—I have been miserably cheated; perhaps some of my affairs may be retrievable."

He then desired me to call up my two English servants, before whom he dictated to me a memorandum, in which he left his wife and his children to my care, appointing her executrix, but requesting that I would be the guardian of his children, jointly with her; and expressing his wishes, that if she ever took a second husband, it might be his friend Desmond—this he signed; it was witnessed in due form, and
when

when that was done, he gave it me and bade me keep it.—He was fatigued, and asked for a medicine which Geraldine came in to give him—he then fell into a sort of stupor, rather than sleep—when he awoke Geraldine was alone with him—I know not what passed, but when she sent for me I found her drowned in tears, and Verney evidently dying.—In a few moments he expired in her arms.—Bethel, if I had not hopes of living with her, such a death would excite my envy.

There was no affectation of violent affliction in his lovely widow—the natural tenderness of her heart, the thoughts of her children, and the circumstance of their father's dying so far from his country, and in consequence of his unhappy connections, were enough to produce those severe paroxysms of grief in which I saw her for the first twelve hours—at the end of that time she became more calm.—As I found it was her wish that the remains of her husband should be conveyed to England,

I determined that it should be done, and gave orders accordingly.

Mournful as the scene was, I reflected on what the situation of Geraldine would have been had I not been with her; and felt a degree of satisfaction which the possession of worlds could not bestow.

It is now time to consider of our return to Meudon—I have been entreating her directions; but I see the circumstance of going, so recently a widow, with a man of whose attachment to her she cannot now be ignorant, is very oppressive to her delicate sense of propriety; yet, very certain it is, that the whole world united to censure it, should not induce me to quit her an instant.—Hitherto her mind, weakened by long anguish, has not recovered firmness enough to decide.—She weeps, and tells me in a voice rendered inarticulate by her tears, that she leaves the direction of all to me.

Adieu! dear Bethel, as soon as I know our route, I will write again, in the hope
that

that you will continue to let me hear from you.—Will it seem unfeeling if I *say* that I am a *happy* fellow? I do not know—but I am sure I should be very *stupid* if I did not feel that *I am so*—I mean, however, only comparatively happy, for I intend to be a great deal happier; but I know that it must be many tedious months first.

Nov. 11, 1791.

I had sealed my letter, and was dispatching it by a messenger to England, with several from Geraldine to her family, when I was amazed by the sudden appearance of my friend Montfleuri, who, rushing into a lower apartment of the poor house I inhabit in this village, threw himself into my arms; and, before I could recover my surprise, disengaged himself, and put into them his wife; on whom, with undescribable astonishment and pleasure, I recognized Fanny Waverly, the sister of my Geraldine.

I was

I was very glad that this unguarded introduction was not made to her instead of to me; for in her present state of mind I know not what might have been the consequence.

I contrived that the knowledge of her sister's being here, of whose marriage she was entirely ignorant, might not reach her so abruptly—I had the inexpressible happiness to find that she considered this arrival as the most fortunate circumstance that could have befallen her.—With what delight does she gaze on her sister—how affecting, how interesting is the tender friendship between them.

Montfleuri and I have now settled every thing for our journey immediately—We shall quit this place on the day following to-morrow; and he is to send some of his own servants, with two of mine, in whom I can confide, to attend the last offices that can be done for poor Verney—This sad ceremony being over, we go to Montfleuri, and from thence to Paris, or rather to Meudon,

Meudon.—*Now*, there is nothing wrong or improper in my attending Geraldine—Blessings on the lovely little Fanny for coming hither.—If Montfleuri should forget his good resolutions, and relapse into that libertinism which was his only fault, I shall not forgive him; but, at present, he seems the most truly happy, as he is always the gayest creature in the world.

LET.

LETTER XXV.

TO MR. BETHEL.

Meudon, Dec. 26, 1791.

MY EXCELLENT FRIEND,

FOR so, I persuade myself, I may call you—I write to you by the express with our dear friend, Desmond, who begs me and *ma douce* Fanni, to tell you what he thinks we can say better than he can himself.

And, indeed, he is so occupied with his love and his hopes, distant as they must be, that he sometimes seems to lament the necessity of acknowledging that any other persons in the world have a right to share his thoughts or his affections—If he can sit whole hours, silent, in the room with Geraldine, he is content—If he knows she is engaged, or unwilling to be in company, he takes her children in his arms—he plays with, he caresses them; and still he is content.—I thought I had been tolerably in love, when I determined on an

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affair,

affair, so entirely out of my way, as marrying; but my love is really of so humble a species, when put by the side of this sublime passion of my friend's, that I am afraid my amiable *Fanchon* will discover the difference, and be discontent with me.

But all this is wandering from my purpose, which is to tell you, that we are hastening to England, where we hope to be within this month.

I hate writing long letters; and therefore I will only relate what Desmond tells me he wishes you to know.—You have, before now, received the commissions with which he troubled you about poor Verney, and we are satisfied will execute them.

We bring with us four children; and that there may be no more mystery about this; that Geraldine's reputation may not suffer, which otherwise it might do, even in your eyes, I will confide to you the truth.

I was so indiscreet and thoughtless as to encourage, in the gay and unguarded heart of my sister de Boisbelle, an affection for Desmond, while he was at my house, little imagin-

imagining the cruelty I was guilty of towards them both.—Indeed, I knew, that Josephine had been married against her inclination; and had an attachment, almost from her infancy, to a naval officer, a near relation, which, I supposed, guard enough against any other impression; and though I used to rally her about Desmond, I was so prepossessed with this idea, that the possible consequence of encouraging her apparent preference to him, never occurred to me.—When he was wounded at Marseilles, I flew to him, and Josephine went with me.—We attended him through his alarming illness, and when political business called me away, I delegated to my sister the task of taking care of my friend.

No part of the event was to be wondered at, unless it was the greatness of mind which Josephine evinced.—As soon as she became too well assured that the consequence of her indiscreet attachment could not be finally concealed, she determined to save Desmond from any resentment which I might have felt, by declaring to

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me,

me, that it was to her own unguarded folly, and not to any art or deception on his part, that the blame was owing—She told me he had promised nothing; that he used no art to betray her; but, on the contrary, had told her that his whole soul was dedicated to another.—Should I have been wise, under these circumstances, to have destroyed my friend? or to have given him a chance of destroying me?—I think it was much more rational to endeavor to conceal what could not be amended—I did so; and it was *Josephine*, whom I attended, that caused such speculation at Bridge-foot; and who, being taken for Geraldine, occasioned to my wife all the terror and uneasiness she has since described to me.

Her going thither was concerted between Geraldine and Desmond; and it was to the generous tenderness of Geraldine, that my sister consented, and Desmond determined to confide their child.

My sister, as soon as she recovered, went to London; and I took care that her
infant,

infant, which was a girl, should be conveyed to Paris, as Desmond seemed anxious, that wherever Geraldine was, the little creature might be put under her protection—It was to meet and convey this charge to her, that Desmond left Meudon on the day that Geraldine so abruptly quitted that place.—My sister is since gone to Italy, and is now under the protection of Monsieur d'Hauteville—Her husband has not been heard of since the night in which Verney received the wound that cost him his life—If he is dead, and my relation, de Rivemont, ever returns from the East-Indies, where he has, for three years, been stationed, it is probable that their first attachment will end in a marriage; but I shall never deceive him as to what has happened in his absence.

Thus, my dear Sir, I have acquitted myself in informing you of what, though Desmond owned it was necessary you should know, he could not prevail on himself to relate to you.

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Have

Have you not heard in England, that Mr. Verney, an English gentleman, travelling for his amusement, has been inhumanly fallen upon by a party of the national troops, and killed?—This is, I understand, the report that has universally gained credit; yet, I beg to assure you, that it was in attempting to drive the French from Avignon, which, in a fit of desperate valour, his party undertook; and not in any tumult, or even by the hands of ruffians, who are equally the dread and scourge of all parties, that Verney fell; and that, as I believe, Boisbelle has fallen also.

But thus it is, that, throughout the revolution, every circumstance has, on your side the water, been exaggerated, falsified, distorted, and misrepresented, to serve the purposes of party; and thus I, as well as Desmond, fear it will continue to be—Probably much more cause will arise for it than has yet arisen; for, according to every present appearance, the hydra, despotism, is raising in every country of Europe

rope one of its detestable *heads* against the liberty of France.

Should this arrive, it is true, I shall be torn from a circle of friends, where the happiness of my *life* is placed, to draw the sword once more; but he must be a despicable wretch, who, in such a cause, would refuse to sacrifice his life itself.

In the mean time, however, let us not waste the moments, as they are passing, in dark speculations on the future; which, after all, we cannot arrest or amend—It is still more foolish to embitter the present with useless regret; and, as to the past,

“Mortels!—voulez-vous tolérer la vie?
Oubliez, & jouissez,*”

is a very good maxim.

Dear Sir! I wish you all happiness with your amiable family—And am, with sincere respect,

Your most faithful

And devoted servant,

JONVILLE DE MONTFLEURI.

* Voltaire.

LETTER XXVI.

TO MR. BETHEL.

Bath, Feb. 6, 1792.

COME, my dear Bethel, I beseech you come hither, and render by your presence, still more happy, those friends for whom you have ever been so generously interested—Come and see Geraldine restored to her tranquillity, and your happy friend every day more tenderly attached to her; and reckoning (with impatience he vainly endeavours to stifle) the months that must yet elapse before she can be wholly his.—Oh! were you to see her—were you to witness, in addition to all her former charms, her behaviour to a mother, who was once so harsh, so ungenerous, so cruel to her; were you to see the compassionate attention with which she

she treats her old friend, Miss Elford, whose malicious representations cost her so dear; were you to behold the tender solicitude which she bestows equally on her own children, and on my little girl, you would love her a thousand—oh! a million times better than ever; and would, with me, bless the hour when I did not, when, indeed, I found *I could not*, take your advice and *forget her!*

Bethel, my dear friend, come to me I beseech you, that I may have somebody to whom I can talk of Geraldine when I do not see her—Montfleuri is too volatile; he loves his wife passionately, but my adoration for her sister he cannot comprehend; and, by the rest of the people, I see it would be understood still less.

—And yet there are many, many hours when I am obliged (by these detestable rules, to the observance of which we sacrifice so many days, and hours, and years of happiness) to be absent from her.—Oh! 'twould be an alleviation of their insupportable

supportable tediousness, if you would let me talk to you about her, and hear all the plans I have laid down for happiness—If you will come only for a fortnight I will return with you into Kent; it will be some amusement to me now, to settle an house which, in eight, or *at farthest* ten months (for it is now above three since she has been a widow) Geraldine may inhabit—I can waste a month or six weeks there—She seems to wish it; for, I believe, I sometimes frighten her by my restless and vehement temper—yet she may do with me what she pleases; it is only when I am divided from her, to comply with some ridiculous whim of some formal and ridiculous old woman, that I lose my temper.—When I am with her I am patient and tranquil—unless an idea crosses me, as it does now and then, that I am unworthy of the excessive happiness of being her husband, and that some dreadful event will tear her from me!—If she looks pale, though only from some slight cold or accidental fatigue, I fancy her about to be
ill,

illy, and weary her with my apprehensions and enquiries—She bears with all my folly patiently; or if she chides, it is with a sweetness that makes me almost love to be chidden.

Will this lovely, this adorable woman, be indeed mine?—Did I tell you, Bethel, how successfully I had managed the affairs of her children?—Scarsdale seemed disposed to give me a great deal of trouble, but now it is all settled.—Those dear infants will be less injured by their father's imprudence than I apprehended; and for their future destiny, as to pecuniary concerns, their beloved mother is no longer anxious.

Heavens! dare I trust myself with the rapturous hope, that on the return of this month, in the next year, Geraldine will bear *my* name—Will be the directress of *my* family—will be my friend—my mistress—my wife!—I set before me these scenes—I imagine these days of happiness to come—I see the beloved group assembled at Sedgewood.—My Geraldine—You, my
III
dear

dear Bethel—your sweet Louisa—my friend Montfleuri, and his Fanny.—I imagine the delight of living in that tender confidence of mutual affection, which only such a circle of friends can taste.—I go over in my imagination our studies, our amusements, our rural improvements; a series of domestic and social happiness, for which only life is worth having—I believe, I trust it will be mine, and I exclaim—

Viver così vorrai,
Vorrai morir così!

Heaven grant it!—But till that hour arrives, when the assurance of such felicity is more completely given me—Oh! lend me, dear Bethel, some of your calm reason to check my impatience; and soothe, with your usual friendship, the agitated heart—which, whatever else may disturb it, will ever be faithfully grateful to you, while it beats in the bosom of your

LIONEL DESMOND.

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